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BRESSANT

A ROMANCE

78259.

BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

K-k 207

HENRY S. KING & CO.
65 CORNHILL & 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
1873

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THE FIRST VOLUME.

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BRESSANT

CHAPTER I.

HOW PROFESSOR VALEYON LOSES HIS HANDKERCHIEF.

ONE warm afternoon in June—the warmest of the season thus far—Professor Valeyon sat smoking a black clay pipe upon the broad balcony, which extended all across the back of his house, and overlooked three acres of garden enclosed by a solid stone wall. All the doors in the house were open, and most of the windows; so that any one passing in the road might have looked up through the gabled porch and the passage-way which divided the house, so to speak, into two parts, and seen the Professor's brown linen legs and slippers down-at-the-heel, projecting into view beyond the

framework of the balcony door. Indeed—for the Professor was an elderly man, and in many respects a creature of habit—precisely this same phenomenon could have been observed on any fine afternoon during the summer,—even to the exact amount of brown linen leg visible.

Why the old gentleman's chair should always have been so placed as to allow a view of so much of his anatomy and no more, is a question of too subtle and abstruse conditions to be solved here. One reason doubtless lay in the fact that by craning forward over his knees he could see down the passage-way, through the porch, and across the grass-plat which intervened between the house and the fence, to the road, thus commanding all approaches from that direction; while his outlook on either side and in front remained as good as from any other position whatsoever. To be sure, the result would have been more easily accomplished had the chair been moved two feet further forwards; but that would have made the Professor too much a public spectacle; and although by no means backward in appearing, at the fitting time, before

his fellow men, he enjoyed and required a certain amount of privacy.

Moreover, it was not towards the road that Professor Valeyon's eyes were most often turned. They generally wandered southwards over the ample garden, and across the long winding valley to the range of rough-backed hills, which abruptly invaded the further horizon. It was a sufficiently varied and vigorous prospect, and one which years had endeared to the old gentleman, as if it were the features of a friend. Especially was he fond of looking at a certain open space near the summit of a high wooded hill directly opposite. It was like an oasis among a desert of trees. Had it become overgrown, or had the surrounding timber been cut away, the Professor would have taken it much to heart. A voluntary superstition of this kind is not uncommon in elderly gentlemen of more than ordinary intellectual power. It is a sort of half-playful revenge they wreak upon themselves for being so wise. Probably Professor Valeyon would have been at a loss to explain why he valued this small green spot so much; but, in times of doubt or trouble, he seemed to find help and relief in gazing at it.

The entire range of hills was covered with a dense and tangled timber-growth, save where the wood-cutters had cleared out a steep rectangular space, and dotted it with pale yellow lumber piles, that looked as if nothing less than a miracle kept them from rolling over and over down to the bottom of the valley; or where the gray irregular face of a precipice denied all foothold to the boldest roots. There was nothing smooth, swelling or graceful, in the aspect of the range. They seemed, hills though they were, to be inspired with the souls of mountains, which were ever seeking to burst the narrow bounds that confined them. And for his part, the Professor liked them much better than if they had been mountains indeed. They gave an impression of greater energy and vitality, and were all the more comprehensible and lovable, because not too sublime and vast.

In another way, his garden afforded as much pleasure to the Professor as his hills. From having planned and in a great measure made it himself, he took in it a peculiar pride and interest. He knew just the position of every plant and shrub, tree and flower, and in what

sort of condition they were as regarded luxuriance and vigour. Sitting quietly in his chair, his fancy could wander in and out along the winding paths, mindful of each new opening vista or backward scene; of where the shadow fell, and where the sunshine slept hottest; could inhale the fragrance of the tea-rose bush, and pause beneath the branches of the elm tree; the material man remaining all the while motionless, with closed eyelids, or now and then half opening them to verify by a glance some questionable recollection. This utilization, by the mental faculties alone, of knowledge acquired by physical experience, always produces an agreeable subconsciousness of power —the ability to be at the same time active and indolent.

In about the centre of the garden flopped and tinkled a weak-minded little fountain. The shrubbery partly hid it from view of the balcony, but the small irregular sound of its continuous fall was audible in the quiet of the summer afternoons. Weak-minded though it was, Professor Valeyon loved to listen to it. It suited him better than the full-toned rush and splash of a heavier water power; there was about

it a human uncertainty and imperfection which brought it nearer to his heart. Moreover, weak and unambitious though it was, the fountain must have been possessed of considerable tenacity of purpose to say the least; otherwise, doing so little, it would not have been persistent enough to keep on doing it at all. It was really wonderful, on each recurring year, to behold this poor little water-spout effecting neither more nor less than the year before, and with no signs of any further aspirations for the future.

A flight of five or six granite steps led up from the garden to the balcony, and although they were quite as old as the rest of the house, they looked nearly as fresh and crude as when they were first put down. The balcony itself was strongly built of wood, and faced by a broad and stout railing, darkened by sun and rain, and worn smooth by much leaning and sitting. Overhead spread an ample roof, which kept away the blaze of the noonday sun, but did not deny the later and ruddier beams an entrance. On either side the doorway the windows of the dining-room and of the Professor's study opened down nearly to the floor.

Everything in the house seemed to have some reference to the balcony, and in summer it was certainly the most important part of all.

From the balcony to the front door extended, as has already been said, a straight passage-way, into which the stairs descended, and on which opened the doors of three rooms. It was covered with a deeply-worn strip of oil-cloth, the pattern being quite undistinguishable in the middle, and at the entrances of the doors and foot of the stairs, but appearing with tolerable clearness for a distance of several inches out along the walls. A high wainscoting ran along the sides; at the front door stood an old-fashioned hat-tree, with no hats upon it; for the Professor had a way of wearing his hat into the house, and only taking it off when he was seated at his study table.

The gabled porch was wide and roomy, but had seen its best days, and was rather out of repair. The board flooring creaked as you stepped upon it, and the seams of the roof admitted small rills of water when it rained hard, which, falling on the old brown mat, hastened its decay not a little. A large, arched window opened on either side, so that one standing in

the porch could be seen from the upper and lower front windows of the house. The outer woodwork and roof of the porch were covered by a woodbine, trimmed, however, so as to leave the openings clear.

A few rickety steps, at the sides and between the cracks of which sprouted tall blades of grass, led down to the path which terminated in the gate. This path was distinguished by an incongruous pavement of white limestone slabs, which were always kept carefully clean. The gate was a rattle-boned affair, hanging feebly between two grandfatherly old posts, which hypocritically tried to maintain an air of solidity, though perfectly aware that they were well-nigh rotted away at the base. The action of this gate was assisted—or more correctly encumbered—by the contrivance of a sliding ball and chain, creating a most dismal clatter and flap as often as it was opened. The white-washed picket fence, scaled and patched by the weather, kept the posts in excellent countenance; and enclosed a moderate glass-plot, adorned with a couple of rather barren black cherry-trees, and as many firs, with low-spread branches.

Above the house and the road rose a rugged eminence, sparely clothed with patches of grass, brambles, and huckleberry bushes, the grey knots of rock pushing up here and there between. On the summit appeared against the sky the outskirts of a sturdy forest, paradise of nuts and squirrels. The rough road ran between rude stone fences and straggling apple-trees to the village, lying some two miles to the south-east. About two hundred yards beyond the Parsonage—so Professor Valeyon's house was called, he, in times past, having officiated as pastor of the village—it made a sharp turn to the left around a spur of the hill, bringing into view the tall white steeple of the village meeting-house, relieved against the mountainous background beyond.

They dined in the Parsonage at two o'clock. At about three the Professor was wont to cross the entry to his study, take his pipe from its place on the high wooden mantel-piece, fill it from the brown earthenware tobacco-box on the table, and stepping through the window on to the balcony, take his place in his chair. Here he would sit sometimes till sun-down, composed in body and mind; dreaming, er-

haps, over the rough pathway of his earlier life, and facilitating the process by exhaling long wreaths of thinnest smoke-layers from his mouth, and ever and anon crossing and recrossing his legs.

On the present afternoon it was really very hot. Professor Valeyon, occupying his usual position, had nearly finished his second pipe. He had thrown off the light linen duster he usually wore, and sat with his waistcoat open, displaying a somewhat rumpled but very clean white shirt-bosom; and his sturdy old neck was swathed in the white necktie which was the only visible relic of his ministerial career. He had covered his bald head with a handkerchief, for the double purpose of keeping away the flies, and creating a cooling current of air. One of his down-trodden slippers had dropped off, and lay sole-upwards on the floor. There was no symptom of a breeze in the still, warm, valley, nor even on the jagged ridges of the opposing hills. The Professor, with all his appliances for coolness and comfort, felt the need of one strongly.

Mellowed by the distance, the long shriek of the engine, on its way from New York, streamed

upon his ears and set him thinking. A good many years since he had been to New York!—nine, positively nine—not since the year after his wife's death. It hardly seemed so long, looking back upon it. He wondered whether time had passed as silently and swiftly to his daughters as to him. At all events, they had grown in the interval from little girls into young ladies—Cornelia nineteen, and Sophie not more than a year younger. 'Bless me!' murmured the Professor aloud, taking the pipe from his mouth, and bringing his heavy eyebrows together in a thoughtful frown.

He would scarcely have believed, in his younger years, that he would have remained anywhere so long, without even a thought of changing the scene. But then, his society days were over long ago, and he had seen all he ever intended to see of the world. Here he had his house, and his daily newspaper, and his books, and his garden, and the love and respect of his daughters and fellow-townspeople. Was not that enough—was it not all he could desire? But here, insensibly, the Professor's eyes rested upon the vacant spot at the summit of the hill opposite.

Very few people, be they never so old, or their circumstances never so good, would find it impossible to mention something which they believe they would be the happier for possessing. Perhaps Professor Valeyon was not one of the exceptions, and was haunted by the idea that, were some certain event to come to pass, life would be more pleasant and gracious to him than it was now. Doubtless, however, an ideal aspiration of some kind, even though it be never realised, is itself a kind of happiness, without which we might feel at a loss. If the Professor's solitary wish had been fulfilled, and there had been no longer cause for him to say, 'If I had but this, I should be satisfied,' might it not still happen that in some unguarded, preoccupied moment he should start and blush to find his lips senselessly forming themselves into the utterance of the old formula? Would it not be a sad humiliation to acknowledge that the treasure he had all his life craved, did not so truly fill and occupy his heart as the mere act of yearning after it had done?

In indulging in these speculations, however, we are pretending to a deeper knowledge of

Professor Valeyon's private affairs than is at present authorisable. After a while he withdrew his eyes from the hill tops, sighed, as those do whose thoughts have been profoundly absorbed, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe. He began to debate within himself—for the mind, unless strictly watched, is apt to waver between light thoughts and grave—whether or no it was worth while to make a second journey into the study after more tobacco. Perhaps Cornelia was within call, and would thus afford a means of cutting the Gordian knot at once. No! he remembered now that she had walked over to the village for the afternoon mail, and would not be back for some time yet. And Sophie—poor child! she would not leave her room for two weeks to come, at least.

'I wonder whether they ever want to see anything of the outside world,' said the old gentleman to himself, elevating his chin and scratching his short white beard. 'Reasonable to suppose they could appreciate something better than the society hereabouts! A picnic once in a while—sleigh-ride in winter—sewing-bees—dance at—at Abbie's; and all in the

company of a set of country bumpkins, like Bill Reynolds, and awkward farmers' daughters!

'It won't do—must be attended to! The good education I was at such pains to give them—it'll only make them miserable if they're to wear their lives out here. I'm getting old and selfish—that's the truth of the matter. I want to sit here and have my girls take care of me! Pshaw!

'Sophie, now—well, perhaps she don't need it so much, yet; she's younger than her sister, and has a good deal more internal resource: besides, she's too delicate at present. But Neelie—Neelie ought to go at once—this very summer. She needs an enormous deal of action and excitement, bodily and mental both, to keep her in wholesome condition. Has that same restless, feverish devil in her that I used to have; never do to let it feed upon itself! must get her absorbed in outside things!

'But what am I to do?' resumed the Professor, sitting up in his chair and shaking out his shirt-sleeves—for the heat of his meditations had brought on a perspiration: 'what can I do—eh? Sophie not in condition to travel—can't leave her to take Cornelia—no one else to

take her—and she can't go alone, that's certain! Humph!'

Professor Valeyon paused in his soliloquy, like a man who has turned into a closed court under the impression that it is a thoroughfare, and stared down with upwrinkled forehead at the sole of the kicked-off slipper, indulging the while in a mental calculation of how many days it would take for the hole near the toe to work down to the hole under the instep, and thus render problematical the possibility of keeping the shoe on at all. It might take three weeks, or, say at the utmost, a month; one month from the present time. It was at the present time about the 15th of June, the 14th or the 15th, say the 15th! Well, then, on the 15th of July the slipper would be worn out; in all human probability the weather would be even hotter then than it was now; and yet, in the face of that heat, he would be obliged to go over to the village, get Jonas Hastings to fit him with a new pair, and then go through the long agony of breaking them in! At the thought, great drops formed on the old gentleman's nose, and ran suddenly down into his white moustache.

But this digression of thought was but super-

ficial, and the sense that something serious underlaid it remained always latent. The Professor leaned back in his chair, and sighed again heavily. It was true that he was growing old, and now that he contemplated action, he felt that in the last nine years the inertia of age had gained upon him. Besides, he greatly loved his daughters, and though it is easy to say that the greatest love is the greatest unselfishness, yet do we find a weakness in our hearts which we cannot believe wholly wrong, strongly prompting us to yearn and cling—even unwisely—to those who have our best affection. 'And what seems wise to-day may be proved folly to-morrow,' is our argument, 'so let us cling to the good we have.'

And Professor Valeyon well knew that what time his daughters departed to visit the outer world was likely to be the beginning of a longer journey than to Boston or New York. They were attractive, and, it was to be supposed, liable to be attracted; he would not be so weak as to imagine that their love for their father could long remain supreme. But this old man, who had kept abreast of the learning of the world, and was scarred with many a

bruise and stab received during his life's journey; who had filled a pulpit, too, and preached Christian humility to his fellow-townspeople, had yet so much human heat and pride glowing like embers in his old heart as to feel strong within him a bitter jealousy and sense of wrong towards whatever young upstarts should intrude themselves, and venture to brag of a love for his flesh and blood which might claim precedence over his own. Doubtless the feeling was unworthy of him, and he would, when the time came, play his part generously and well; but, so long as the matter was purely imaginary, we may allow him some natural ebullition of feeling.

So powerful, indeed, was the effect produced upon Professor Valeyon by the succession and conflict of gloomy and painful emotions, that he laid down his black clay pipe upon the broad arm of the easy-chair, and began to search in all directions for his handkerchief: indulging himself meanwhile with the base reflection that as there was no present possibility of depriving himself of his daughters, that ceremony must, for a time at least, be postponed. While yet the handkerchief-hunt was in full

cry, the Professor's ears caught the rattle and flap of the opening gate, and following it the quick, vigorous tap of small boot-heels upon the marble flagstones. Next came a light, rustling spring up the creaking porch steps, and ere the old gentleman could get his head far enough over his knees to see down the entry, a fresh-looking young woman appeared smiling in the doorway, dressed in a tawny summer suit, and holding up in one hand a long, slender envelope, sealed with a conspicuous monogram, and stamped with the New York post-mark.

CHAPTER II.

SIGNS OF A THUNDER-SHOWER.

BEFORE the delivery of the letter, a very pretty little ceremony took place. The Professor had stretched forth his hand to receive it, when, by a sudden turn of the wrist and arm, the young lady whisked it out of his reach and behind her back, and in place of it brought down her fresh, sweet face with its fragrant mouth to within two inches of his own wrinkled and bristly visage. A moment after, the ceremony was completed, the letter delivered, and the postman, stepping over her father's fallen slipper, leaned against the balcony railing and waited for further developments.

The Professor took his spectacles from his waistcoat pocket, placed them carefully upon his strongly-marked nose, and scrutinized in turn the direction, postmark, and seal. With a sniff of surprise he then tore open the envelope and became immediately absorbed in the contents

of the enclosure, indicating his progress by much pursing and biting of his lips, wrinkling of his forehead, and drawing together of his heavy eyebrows. Having at length reached the end of the last page, he turned it sharply about, and went through it once more with half-articulate grunts of comment; and finally, folding the letter carefully up, and replacing it in the torn envelope, he caught the spectacles off his nose, and with them in one hand and the paper in the other, fixed his eyes upon the vacant spot at the summit of the hill.

His daughter meanwhile had taken off her brown straw hat, and was using it as a fan, keeping up a light tattoo with one foot upon the plank flooring. Her face was glowing with her four-mile walk in the hot sun, but she showed no signs of weariness. The position in which she stood was easy and graceful, but there was nothing statuesque or imposing about it; it was evident that at the very next instant she might shift into another equally as happy. Her eyes wandered from one object to another with the absence of concentration of one whose mind is not fixed upon anything in particular. From the letter between the Professor's finger

and thumb, they travelled upwards to his thoughtful countenance; thence took a leap to the decrepit waterspout which depended weakly from the corner of the balcony roof, and thence again ascended to a great solid white cloud, with turreted outline clear against the blue, which was slowly sliding across the sky from the westward, and threatened soon to cut off the afternoon sunshine.

The Professor restlessly altered the position of his legs, thereby drawing his daughter's attention once more to himself. Thinking she had waited as long as was requisite for the maintenance of her dignity as a non-inquisitive person, she transferred herself lightly to the arm of her father's chair, grasping his beard in her plump, slender hand, and turned his face up towards hers.

'Well, papa! aren't you going to tell what the news is? Is it nice?'

'Very nice!' said papa, taking her irreverent hand into his own, and keeping it there. 'At least you will think so,' he added, looking half playful and half wistful.

Cornelia brought her lips into a pout, all ready to say, 'what?' but did not say it, and

gazed at her father with round interrogating eyes.

'You'd be very glad to go away and leave me, of course,' continued the Professor, assuming an air of studied unconcern.

'Papa!' exclaimed the young lady, with an emphatic intonation of affection, indignation, and bewilderment.

'What! not be glad to go to New York, and to all the fashionable watering-places, and be introduced to all the best society?' queried the old gentleman, in hypocritical astonishment.

'Papa!' again exclaimed the young lady; but this time in a tone which the tumult of delight, anticipation, and a fear lest there should be a mistake somewhere, softened almost into a whisper. She had risen from the arm of the chair to her feet, and stood with her hands clasped together beneath her chin.

The Professor laughed a short and rather unnatural laugh. 'I thought you wouldn't be obstinate about it, when you came to think it over,' said he, drily. He folded up his spectacles and put them back in his waistcoat pocket with unusual elaboration of manner. 'So you would really like to have a change,

would you? Well, I trust you will not be disappointed in your expectations of society and watering places. At all events, you may learn to appreciate home more!' Here the Professor laughed again, as if he considered it a joke.

Cornelia was too much entranced by the new idea to have any notion of what he was talking about; she was already hundreds of miles away, living in stately houses, driving in magnificent carriages, sweeping in gorgeous silks and laces through gilded and illuminated ball-rooms, and listening to courtly compliments from handsome and immaculate gentlemen. But when, presently, her scattered faculties began to return to a more normal state, an unquenchable curiosity to know how the miracle was to be worked, seized upon her. She dropped on her knees beside her father's chair, took his hand in both of hers, and looked up in his face.

'But how is it to be, papa, dear? I mean, whom am I to go with? and when am I to go? —dear me, I haven't a thing to wear! Shall I have time to get anything ready? Isn't Sophie invited too? How strange it all seems! I can

hardly realize it, somehow. From whom is the letter?'

'Can you remember when you were about nine years old?' inquired the Professor.

'I don't know, I am sure,' replied Cornelia, in some surprise at the irrelevancy of the question. 'Nothing particular. Oh! I know! we were in New York!' said she, beginning to see some connection, and breaking into a smile.

'Do you remember seeing a lady there,' continued the Professor, talking and looking straight at nothing, 'who made a great deal of you and Sophie, and asked you to call her Aunt Margaret?'

'Oh—I believe—I do—,' said Cornelia, slowly; 'I think I didn't like her much, because she was deaf or something, and talked in such a high voice. She wasn't really our aunt, was she? Did she write the letter?'

'Yes, she did, my dear, and invites you and Sophie to spend the summer with her. You don't dislike her so much as to refuse, I suppose, do you?'

'Oh! papa!' exclaimed his daughter, deprecatingly; for the old gentleman had spoken rather in a tone of reproof. 'I'm sure she's

as kind and good as she can be; I was only telling what I especially remembered about her, you know. How did she come to think of us after so long?'

'I used to know her quite well, long before you were born, my dear,' replied the Professor, tapping with his fingers on the arm of the chair; 'and at that time I should not have been surprised at her offering me any kindness. I *am* surprised now,' he added, with a good deal of feeling; 'she's a better friend than I thought.'

Cornelia remained silent for several moments, because, not in the least comprehending what sort of ground her papa was walking on, she feared that the questions and remarks she was anxious to advance might jar with his mood. At length, a sufficient time having elapsed to warrant, in her opinion, the introduction of intelligible topics, she looked up and spoke again.

'How soon, papa—how soon did you say—am I to go?'

'First of July, Aunt Margaret says. Will that give you time enough to make yourself fine?'

'Now, papa, you're making fun of me,' exclaimed the young lady, delighted that he should be in the humour to do so, yet speaking in that semi-reproachful tone which ladies sometimes adopt when the other sex makes their costume the object of remark. 'I can make myself as fine as I can be by that time, of course! But how is it about Sophie? Won't she be able to go too?'

Papa shook his head, and combed his bristly white beard with his fingers. 'Sophie has been very ill,' said he; 'it wouldn't be safe to have her go anywhere this summer. We can't take too much care of her. Typhoid pneumonia is a dangerous thing, and though she's on the way to recovery now, she might easily relapse. And then,' added the old gentleman, in a more inward tone, 'she would recover no more.'

Although he mumbled this sentence to himself, Cornelia caught his meaning, more, probably, from his manner than from anything she heard; and being of an emotional and warmly-tender disposition, she began to cry. She loved her sister very much; and something must also be allowed to the fact that, having a great happiness in prospect for herself, she could

afford to expend more sympathy on those less fortunate. As for the Professor, he, for a second time that afternoon, gave evidence of possessing disgracefully little control over himself. He began another fruitless search after his handkerchief, and finally asked Cornelia, with some heat, whether she knew what had become of it.

'Why, it's on your head, papa!' warbled she, brightly changing a laugh for her tears; and papa, putting up his hand in great confusion, and finding that it was indeed so, laughed also, and this time in a perfectly natural manner; but he blew his nose very resoundingly, for all that.

The atmosphere being serene once more, the joy of the future became again strong in Cornelia's heart, and coupled with it, an earnest longing to disburden herself to some one, and who but her sister should be her confidant? So she rose from her knees, and picked up her brown straw hat, which, in the excitement, had fallen to the floor.

'Is there anything you'd like to do, papa dear?' asked she, laying her forefinger caressingly upon his bald head. 'Because if there

isn't, I, I should like—I think I'd better go to Sophie.'

Professor Valeyon nodded his head, being in truth desirous of taking solitary counsel with himself. The letter contained a good deal more than the invitation he had communicated to Cornelia, and he could not feel at ease until he had more thoroughly analysed and digested it. So when his daughter had vanished through the door, with a smile and a kiss of the hand, he mounted his spectacles again, and spread the letter open on his knee.

After reading a while in silence, he spoke; though his voice was audible only to his own mental ears.

'There was a time,' said he, 'when I wouldn't have believed I could ever hear the news of that man's death, and take it so quietly! And now he sends me his son!—as it were bequeaths him to me. Can it be as a hostage for forgiveness, though so late? or is it merely because he knew I could not but feel a vital interest in the boy, and would instruct and treat him as my own? He was a shrewd judge of human nature—and yet, I must not judge him harshly now.'

Here Professor Valeyon happened again to catch sight of his slipper, and interrupted his soliloquy to extend his stockinged toe, fork it towards himself, and having with some trouble got it right side uppermost, to put it on. And then he referred once more to the letter.

'I should like to know whether he was aware that Abbie was here, or that she was alive at all! Margaret says nothing about it in her letter. If he did, of course he must have written to her; or, if he was determined to die as for these last twenty years and more he has lived, he would never *knowingly* have sent the boy where she was, on any consideration. Well, well, I can easily find out how that is, from either Abbie or the boy. By the way, I wonder whether this incognito of his may have anything to do with it? Hum! Margaret says it's only so that he may not be interrupted in his studies by acquaintances. Well, that's likely enough,—that's likely enough!'

'By the way, where's the young man to stay? At Abbie's, of course, if—Margaret says, at some good boarding-house. Well, Abbie's is the only one in town. It's a singular coincidence, certainly, if it *is* a coincidence! Perhaps

I'd better go down at once and see Abbie, and have the whole matter cleared up. I shall have time enough before supper, if I harness Dolly now.'

As Professor Valeyon arrived at this conclusion he uplifted himself, with some slight signs of the rustiness of age, from his chair, took his brown linen duster from the balcony railing across which it had been thrown, and put it on with laborious puffings and a slight increase of perspiration. Then, first turning round to make sure that he had all his belongings with him, he entered the hall door, and passed through into his study.

The rooms in which we live seem to imbibe something of our characteristics, and the examination of a dwelling-place may not infrequently throw some light upon the inner nature of its occupant. The Professor's study was of but moderate size, carpeted with a red and white check straw matting, considerably frayed and defaced in the region of the table, and faded where the light from the windows fell upon it. The four walls were hidden, to a height of about seven feet from the floor, with rows upon rows of books, of all sizes, and varieties of bind-

ing; no small proportion being novels, and even those not invariably of a classical standard. The only picture was a stained engraving of the Transfiguration, over the mantel-piece, in a faded and fly-bespotted gilt frame. In the centre of the room, occupying indeed a pretty large share of all the available space, stood an ample study table, covered with green baize, darkened for a considerable space around the inkstand by innumerable spatterings of ink. It supported a confused medley of natural and unnatural accompaniments to reading and writing. A ponderous ebony inkstand, with solid cut-glass receptacles, one being intended for powder, though none was ever put in it; a mighty dictionary, which being too heavy to be considered movable, occupied one corner of the table by itself; the earthen tobacco-jar, with a small piece chipped from the cover; pamphlets and books, standing or lying upon one another; heaps of rusty steel and blunted quill pens; a quire or two of blue and white letter paper; a paper-knife, loose in the handle, but smooth of edge; a box of lucifer matches, and several burnt ends; an extra pipe or two; the professor's straw hat; a brass rack for holding

letters and cards; and a great deal of pink blotting-paper scattered about everywhere.

Opposite the table stood a chair, straight-backed and severe, in which Professor Valeyon always sat when at work. He had a theory that it was not well to be too much at bodily ease when intellectually occupied. Directly behind the chair, upon the shelf of a book-case, stood a plaster cast of Shakespeare's face, the nose of which was most unaccountably darkened and polished. It is doubtful whether even the Professor himself could have cleared up the mystery of this deepened colour in the immortal bard's nose. But whoever, during those hours set apart by the old gentleman for solitary labor and meditation, had happened to peep in at the window, would ten to one have beheld him tilted thoughtfully back in his chair, abstractedly tweaking with the forefinger and thumb of his right hand the sacred feature in question. He had done it every day for many years past, and never once found himself out; and doubtless the great poet was by far too broad-minded ever to think of resenting the liberty, especially as it was only in his most thoughtful moments that the Professor meddled with him.

The room contained little else in the way of furniture, except a few extra chairs, and a malacca-joint cane, with an ivory head, which stood in a corner near the door. It produced an impression at once of cleanliness and disorder, therein bearing a strong analogy to the Professor's own person and habits; and the disorder was of such a kind, that although no rule or system in the arrangement of anything was perceptible, Professor Valeyon would have been at once and almost instinctively aware of any alteration that might have been made, however slight.

On entering the study, the old gentleman first shuffled up to the fireplace, flapping the heels of his slippers behind him as he went, and deposited his pipe upon the mantel-piece. Next he put on his straw hat, and turning to the engraving of the Transfiguration, which had served him as a looking-glass almost ever since it had hung there, he put himself to rights with his usual fierce scowlings, liftings of the chin, and jerkings at collar and stock. When everything seemed in proper trim, he took his ivory-headed cane from its place in the corner, and made his way along the entry to the front door.

'Bless me!' ejaculated the Professor, as he emerged upon the porch, shading his eye from the white dazzle of the road; 'how hot it is, sure enough!' Scarcely had he spoken, however, when the sun, which had been coquetting for the last half hour with the majestic white cloud which Cornelia had idly watched from the balcony, suddenly plunged his burning face right into its cool soft bosom; and immediately a clear grey shadow gently took possession of the landscape.

'Humph!' grunted the Professor again, turning a sharp, wise eye to the westward, 'we shall have a thunder-shower before long. I must take the covered wagon. But how's this? I declare I've forgotten to change my slippers! I'm growing old—I'm growing old, that's certain!'

As the old gentleman stood shaking his head over this new symptom of approaching senility, he happened to turn his eyes in the direction of the village, and descried a figure approaching rapidly from the turn in the road, which at once arrested his attention.

'Who can that be?' muttered he to himself, frowning to assist his vision. 'None of the town

boys, that's certain. Never saw such a figure but once before! If anything, this is the better man of the two. By the way, what if it should be—! Humph! I believe it is, sure enough.'

By this time the stranger, a very tall and broadly built young man, with a close brown beard, and quick, comprehensive eyes, had arrived opposite the house, and stood with one hand on the gate.

'Is this the Parsonage?' demanded he, speaking with great rapidity of utterance, and turning his head half sideways as he spoke, without, however, removing his eyes from the Professor's face.

The old gentleman nodded his head, 'It is known by that name, Sir!' said he.

With the almost impatient quickness which marked everything he did—a quickness which did not seem in any way allied to slovenliness or inaccuracy, however—the young man pushed through the gate, which protested loudly against such rough usage, and walked hastily up to the porch steps. He paused a moment ere ascending.

'Are you Professor Valeyon?' he asked.

Again the Professor bowed his head in assent.

'And are you —?' began he.

The young man sprang up the steps, and grasping the other's half-extended hand, gave it a brief, hard shake.

'I'm Bressant,' said he.

CHAPTER III.

SOPHIE AND CORNELIA ENTER INTO A COVENANT.

When Cornelia left her father on the balcony, she danced upstairs, and chasséed on tiptoe up to the door of Sophie's room. There she stopped and knocked.

Somehow or other, nobody ever went into that room without knocking. It never entered anyone's head to burst in unannounced. The door was an unimposing-looking piece of deal, grained by some village artist into the portraiture of an as yet undiscovered kind of wood, and considerably impaired in various ways by time. It could not have been the door, therefore. Nor was the bolt ever drawn, save at certain hours of the morning and night. Sophie was not an ogre, either. Cornelia, who was very trying at times, would have found it hard to recall an occasion when Sophie had answered or addressed her sharply or crossly. If she exerted any influence, or wielded any

power, it was not of the kind which attends a violent or morose temper. But no vixen or shrew, how terrible soever she may be, can hope at all times or from all people to meet with respect or consideration; while to Sophie Valeyon the world always put on its best face and manner, secretly wondering at itself the while for being so well-behaved.

As to the affair of knocking, Sophie herself had never said a word about it, one way or another. She always took it as a matter of course; indeed, had she been loquacious on the subject, or insisted upon the observance, Cornelia for one would have been very likely to laugh to scorn and disregard her, therein acting upon a principle of her own, which prompted her to measure her strength against anything which seemed to challenge her, and never to give up if she could help it. But she had never had a trial of strength with Sophie, and possibly was quite contented that it should be so. She would have shrunk from thwarting or crossing her sister as she would from committing a secret sin: there might be no material or visible ill-consequence, but the stings of conscience would be all the sharper.

So Cornelia knocked and entered, and the quiet, cool room in which her sister lay seemed to glow and become enlivened by the joyous reflection of her presence. Yet the effect of the room upon Cornelia was at least as marked. She hushed herself, as it were, and tried, half unconsciously, to adapt herself to the tone of her surroundings; for although her physical nature was sound and healthy, almost to boisterousness, her perceptions remained very keen and delicate, and occasionally rallied her upon the redundancy of her animal well-being with something like reproof.

It was singular, with how few and how simple means was created the impression of purity and repose that this chamber produced! It brought to mind the pearly interior of a shell, and a fanciful person might have listened for the sea music whispering through. The walls were papered with pale gray, relieved by a light pink tracery, and the white muslin curtains were set off by a pink lining. A bunch of wild flowers and grasses, which Cornelia had gathered that morning, and Sophie had arranged, stood on the mantel-piece. There were four or five pictures — one, a bas-relief of Endymion, deep

asleep, yet conscious in his dream that the moon is peeping shyly over his polished shoulder, had been copied from a famous original by Sophie herself. She had painted it in a pale brown mezzo-tint, which was like nothing in nature, but seemed suitable of all others for the embodiment of the classic fable. This picture hung over the mantel-piece. Opposite Sophie's bed was an illumination of the Lord's Prayer, with clear gold lettering, and capitals and border of celestial colours. The dressing-table was covered with a white cloth, on which reposed a comb and brush and a pink pincushion with a muslin cover, and over which hung a crayon of the cherub of the Sistine Madonna, who leans his chin upon his hand.

Within reach of Sophie's hand as she lay, were suspended a couple of hanging shelves, which held her books. There were not a great many of them, but they all bore signs of having been well read, and there was at the same time a certain neatness and spotlessness in their appearance which no merely new books could ever possess, but which was communicated solely by Sophie's pure finger-touches. On the opposite side of the bed stood a small table, on which

ticked a watch; and beside the watch was a work-basket, full of those multifarious little articles that only a woman knows how to get together.

Looking around the room, and noting the delicate nicety and precision of its condition and arrangement, one would have supposed that Sophie's own hands must have been very lately at work upon it. But it was many weeks since she had even sat up in the easy-chair that stood in the rosy-curtained window; and, although now far advanced in convalescence, she had taken no part in the care of her room since her illness. Why it had still continued to retain its immaculateness was one of many similar mysteries which must always surround a character like Sophie's. Everything she accomplished seemed not so much to be done, as to take place, in accordance with her idea or resolve; and there were always, in her manifestations of whatever kind, more spiritual than material elements.

When Cornelia entered, Sophie laid down her sewing, and looked up with a smile in her eyes, which were large and grey, and the only regularly beautiful part of her face. She had a

way of confining a smile to them, when wishing merely to express goodwill or pleasure, which was peculiar to herself, and very effective. Cornelia walked quite soberly up to the bedside, kissed her sister, and then stood silent for several moments.

Compared with her recent exhilaration, this was very extraordinary behaviour. She had rushed upstairs intent upon pouring into Sophie's ears the whole gorgeous tale of her hopes and anticipations for the coming summer. Yet no sooner was she within the door than her excitement seemed to die out, and her enthusiasm ebb away. Extraordinary as it appeared, it was by no means a rare occurrence. Cornelia alone could have told how common; if, indeed, she ever reflected upon the matter. She was very quick to feel a divergence of interests between her sister and herself, and always inferred that Sophie could not sympathise with anything for which she had no personal taste. In the present instance, it had all at once occurred to her that her sister would not be likely to care half so much about the gaieties of fashionable watering-places and city life as she did, and might therefore treat with indifference what was to her an affair of

the greatest moment; and a snub being one of those things which Cornelia found it most difficult, even in the mildest form, to endure, she had resolved, on the spur of the moment, to approach the topic of her proposed departure with the same coolness which she expected Sophie to manifest when she heard about it.

'Have you kept at that sewing ever since I went away?' asked she, idly examining the work which Sophie had laid down.

'I believe so,' replied Sophie, stroking her chin to a point between her forefinger and thumb. 'It's so pleasant to be able to sew again at all, that I should consider it no hardship to have to sew all day.'

Cornelia's thoughts immediately reverted to the dresses which the next two weeks must see made.

'You wouldn't be strong enough to do that, though, would you? I mean to sew on dresses, and all that sort of thing?'

'Dresses?' said Sophie, looking up inquiringly into her sister's face. 'Oh! you mean your dress for Abbie's Fourth of July party? I thought you were going to wear your——'

'Oh, no, not that; I wasn't thinking of that,'

interrupted Miss Valeyon, with a gesture as if deprecating the idea of having ever entertained ideas so lowly. 'I shall hardly be in town on the Fourth,' she added reflectively, as if calculating her engagements,

Sophie looked amazed, though it would have taken a keener observer than Cornelia was at the moment to detect the slight contraction of the under eyelids, and the barely perceptible droop of the corners of the mouth. She saw that her sister had something of moment to tell her, and was for some reason coquettish about bringing it out. Cornelia was often entertaining to Sophie when she least had intention of being so; but Sophie was far too tender of the young lady's feelings knowingly to let her suspect it.

'Not be in town?' repeated she, demurely taking up her work, 'why, where are you going, dear?'

'Oh!' said Cornelia, with one of those little half yawns wherewith we cover our nervousness or suspense, 'I didn't tell you, did I? Papa received a letter from a lady in New York, the one who wanted us to call her "Aunt Margaret" when we were there ever so long ago—the year

after mamma died, you know—asking me to come to her house there, and go round with her to Saratoga and all the fashionable watering-places. The invitation was for about the first of July, so——'

Cornelia, speaking with a breathless rapidity which she intended for *sang froid*, had got thus far, when Sophie, who had dropped her work again, and had been regarding her with a beautiful expression of surprise, joy, and affection in her eyes, stretched forth her arms, cooed out a tender little cry of happy congratulation and sympathy, and hugged her sister around the neck for a few moments in a very eloquent silence.

'Why, Sophie!' murmured Cornelia, covered with an astonishment of smiles and tears, 'how sweet you are! I didn't think you'd care; I thought you'd think it foolish in me to be glad, dear Sophie!'

'My darling!' said Sophie, with another hug She felt rebuked and remorseful; for if, as Cornelia's words unconsciously implied, her sympathy was unexpected, it would appear she had gained a reputation for coldness and indifference which she was far from coveting. It oftens happens, certainly, that those whom we

consider intellectually beneath us, and whom, supposing them too dull to comprehend the evolutions of our minds, we occasionally use for our amusement, possess an instinctive insight far keener than that of experience, enabling them to read our very souls with an accuracy which puts our self-knowledge to the blush, and might quite turn the tables upon us, could they themselves but appreciate their power.

'But tell me all about it,' resumed Sophie; 'all the particulars. And then we'll discuss the dresses. Dear me! I long to get to work upon them.'

As a matter of fact, Cornelia had very few particulars to tell: all she knew was the simple fact she had already stated. But it needed only a small spark to enkindle her imagination; she plunged at once into a perfect flower-garden of bright thoughts and rainbow fancies; foreshadowed her whole journey from the arrival in New York to the latest grand ball and conquest; glowed over the horses, the houses, and the people; speculated profoundly in possible romances, and romantic possibilities, and became so eloquent, in a pretty, half-childish, half-

womanish way she had, that Sophie's eyes shone, and she told herself that Neelie was the dearest, cunningest sister in the world.

From these glorious imaginings they descended—or ascended, perhaps—to the dresses, and then Sophie's low, steady voice mingled with Cornelia's rich, strenuous one, like pure water with red wine. Cornelia paced the little room backwards and forwards—she could never keep still when she was talking about what interested her, and now paused by the window, now before the mantel-piece, now leaned for a moment on the footboard of Sophie's bed. She was very happy; indeed, this may have been the happiest hour of her life, past or to come. We all have our happiest hour, probably; and not always shall we find that happiness to have been caused by higher or less selfish considerations than those which animated Cornelia Valeyon.

During one of her visits to the window, she was arrested by the vision of an unknown young man coming up the road. She at once became silent.

'What is it?' demanded Sophie, presently.

'Some man—a new one—a gentleman—awfully big!' reported Cornelia, in detached sentences, with a look between each one.

'As big as Bill Reynolds?' asked Sophie, with a twinkle in her face

'How absurd, Sophie! Bill Reynolds, indeed! He isn't up to this man's shoulder. Besides this is a gentleman, and—Oh!' exclaimed Cornelia, breaking off suddenly, and drawing back a step from the window.

'Has the gentleman had an accident?' inquired Sophie, still twinkling.

'He's stopped here—speaking to somebody—father, I believe; he's coming in—there! do you hear?' cried Cornelia, turning round with large eyes and her finger at her mouth, and speaking in a thrilling whisper. The sound of the quick, irregular tread of Mr. Bressant, following the Professor into the study, was audible from below.

'Who can he be?' resumed she presently, as Sophie said nothing.

'If he's a gentleman, we don't need to know any more, do we?' replied her sister, from behind her sewing.

'Well, he is one,' rejoined Cornelia, uncer-

tain whether she was being made fun of or not. He was dressed like one; not *bandboxy*, you know, but nicely and easily; and he stands and moves well; and then his face——'

'Is he handsome?' asked Sophie, as Cornelia paused.

'Oh! he has that refined look—I can't describe it—better than handsome,' said she, giving a little wave with her hand to carry out her meaning.

'It's lucky he was so big,' remarked Sophie, very innocently, 'or you might not have been able to see so much of him in such a little time.

'Sophie!' said Cornelia, after a silence of some moments, speaking with tragic deliberation; 'you're making fun of me; I think you're very unkind. I don't see what there is to laugh at in what I said; and if there was anything, I think *you* might not laugh.'

'Oh! Neelie—dear Neelie!' exclaimed Sophie, colouring with regret and shame: 'I didn't think you'd mind it; it was only my foolishness. Don't think I meant to be unkind to you, dear. I wish the man had never come here, whoever he is, if he is to come between us in any way. Won't you forgive me, darling?' and she held

out her hand to Cornelia with a wistful, beseeching look in her eyes that thawed her sister's resentment immediately, and after a very brief struggle to preserve her dignity, she subsided with her face upon the pillow beside her sister's.

'We won't ever quarrel or anything again, will we, Sophie?' said she, after a while.

'Never about that gentleman, at all events!' answered Sophie; and then they both laughed and kissed each other to seal the bargain.

Once, long afterwards, Cornelia remembered that kiss, and the words that had accompanied it; and pondered over the bitter significance with which the simple act and playful agreement had become fraught.

But now, the subject was soon forgotten, and they fell to talking about the dresses once more; nor was the topic by any means exhausted when they were interrupted by the Professor's voice calling to them from below.

CHAPTER IV.

A BUSINESS TRANSACTION.

PROFESSOR Valeyon led the way to the study, stood his cane in the corner, and placed a chair for his guest, in silence. 'Just like his father!' said he to himself, as he repaired to the mantelpiece for his pipe; 'not a bit of his mother about him. Who'd have thought so sickly a baby as they said he was, would have grown into such a giant? Smoke?' he added, aloud.

'You must talk loud to me—I'm deaf,' said the young man, with his hand to his ear.

'Pleasant thing in a pupil, that!' muttered the old gentleman, as he filled his pipe and lit it. 'How it reminds one of his father—that bright questioning look, when he leans forward. One might know who he was by that and nothing else!' He sat down in his chair, and ruminated a moment.

'Hardly expected you up here so soon after your loss,' observed he, in as kindly a tone and

manner as was comportable with speaking in a very loud key.

'Loss! I've had no loss!' returned Bressant, with a look of perplexity. 'Oh! you mean my father!' he exclaimed suddenly, throwing his head back with a half-smile. He very seldom laughed aloud. 'There was nothing to do. The funeral was the day before yesterday. I did all the business before then. Yesterday I packed up, and here I am!'

'Death couldn't have been unexpected, I presume?' said the Professor, on whom Bressant's manner made an impression of resignation to his loss rather too complete.

'The hour of death can only be a matter of guess-work at any time,' returned the young man. 'My father had been expecting to die for some months past; but he'd been mistaken once or twice before, and I thought he might be this time. But he happened to guess right.'

'Filial way of talking, that,' thought Professor Valeyon, rather taken aback. 'Didn't get that from his father; he was soft-spoken enough, in all conscience! Queer now, this matter of resemblance! there's a certain something in his style of speaking, and in the way

he looks just after he has spoken, that reminds me of Mrs. Margaret. Deaf people are all something alike, though; and he's been with her a great deal, I suppose. Well, well! as to the way he spoke about his father, what looked like indifference may have been merely embarrassment, or an attempt to disguise feeling; or perhaps it was but a deaf man's peculiarity. At all events, it can do no harm to suppose so.

'Were you with him during his last moments?' asked he.

'Oh yes! I saw him die,' answered Bressant, nodding, and pulling his close-cut brown beard.

Professor Valeyon smoked for a while in silence, occasionally casting puzzled and searching glances at the young man, who took up a book from the table—it happened to be a volume of Celestial Mechanics—and began to read it with great apparent interest. His face was an open and certainly not unpleasant one; very mobile, however, and vivid in its expressions; the eyebrows straight and delicate, and the eyes bright and powerful. The forehead was undeniably fine, prominently and capaciously developed. Nevertheless—and this was what puzzled the Professor—there was a very

evident lack of something in the face, in no way interfering with its intellectual aspect, but giving it at times an unnatural and even uncanny look. In meeting the young man's eyes, the old gentleman was ever and anon conscious of a disposition to recoil and shudder, and at the same time felt impelled, by what resembled a magnetic attraction, to gaze the harder. Did the very fact that some universal human characteristic was omitted from this person's nature endow him with an exceptional and peculiar power? There was an uncertainty, in talking and associating with him, as to what he would do or say; an ignorance of what might be his principles and points of view; an impossibility of supposing him governed by common laws. Such, at least, was the Professor's fancy concerning him.

But again, turning his eyes to his pipe, or out of the window, was it not fancy altogether? Beyond that he was unusually tall and broad across the shoulders, and of a very intelligent cast of features, what was or was there not in this young man different from any other? He had the muffled irregular voice, and alert yet unimpressible manner peculiar to

deafness. But was there anything more? The Professor took another look at him. He was reading, and certainly there were no signs of anything strange in his appearance, more than that, at such a time, he should be reading at all. It was when speaking of his father that the uncanny expression had been especially noticeable. 'Suppose,' said Professor Valeyon to himself, 'we try him on another subject.'

'You've been educated at home, I understand,' began he, from beneath his heavy eyebrows.

'Oh yes!' replied Bressant, shutting his book on his knee, and returning the Professor's look with one of exceeding keenness and comprehensiveness. 'Educated to develope faculties of body and mind, not according to the ordinary school and college system.' He drew himself up, with an air of such marvellous intellectual and physical efficiency, that it seemed to the Professor as if each one of his five senses might equal the whole capacity of a common man. And then it occurred to him that he remembered, many years ago, having heard some one mention a theory of education which aimed rather to give the man power in whatever direction he chose to exercise it, than to store his

mind with greater or less quantities of particular forms of knowledge. The only faculty to be left uncultivated, according to this theory, was that of human love; this being considered destructive, or at least greatly prejudicial, to progress and efficiency in any other direction. The Professor could not at the moment recall who it was had evolved this scheme, but it became involuntarily connected in his mind with Bressant's peculiarities.

'According to the letter I received to-day, you come here to be trained to the ministry,' resumed he. 'Has all your previous education had this in view?'

'The education would have been the same, understand, whatever the end was to be,' explained the young man, with a shrewd smile in his sharp eyes. 'I am as well prepared to study theology as if I had been aiming at it all my life; but I might take up engineering or medicine as well as that. About a year ago I decided to become a minister.'

'And what led you to do that?' demanded the old gentleman with rather a stern frown. He did not like the idea of approaching religion in other than a reverent and self-searching attitude.

'My father first suggested it,' replied Bressant, on whom the frown produced no sort of impression. 'At the time, it surprised me, especially from him. Afterwards I concluded I could not do better. No one has such a chance to move the world as a minister. I thought of Christ, and Paul, and Luther, and many before and since. They were all ministers, and who had greater power? I felt I had the ability, and I decided that it was as a minister I could best use it.'

'But what are you going to use it for?' questioned the Professor, settling his spectacles on his nose, and leaning across the table in his earnestness.

'The men I have mentioned used theirs to invent, or confirm, or overthrow religious sects, and perhaps they couldn't have done better in their age. Their names are as well known now as ever, and that's the best test. But I hope I may discover a better method. I shall have the advantage of their experience and mistakes. Perhaps I shall develope and carry out to its conclusion the dogma of Christianity. That would be well as a beginning.'

'Very well, that's certain!' assented the Professor, drily. 'It's all I shall be able to give you

any assistance in, too; so we needn't discuss what the next step will be. By the way, did you ever hear of doing anything for the glory of God, and for the love of your fellow-men?'

'Oh yes! they're pass-words of the profession, and have their use,' returned Bressant, with another of his keen smiles. 'If you want to climb above the world, the rounds in your ladder must be made of common woods that everybody knows the names of. The bible is full of such, and some of them are works of genius in themselves. After all, it is the people who must immortalize us, and we must feed them with what they are in the habit of eating.'

'What induced you to come here, sir?' asked the Professor abruptly.

'I never should have come of myself," answered the young man, with entire frankness. 'I never heard your name mentioned until less than a year ago. It was the first time my father was expecting to die. He told me you were a wise man, and learned besides; he had known you when you were young; you would have some interest in teaching me; he would feel more at ease to die if he knew you were directing me. I thought it over, as I said, and

decided to come. Understand, I knew of no one except you, and I didn't want to go to a theological school.'

'Humph!' grunted the Professor, who was by no means well satisfied with the prospect, yet had reasons of his own for taking up the matter if possible. He smoked for a while longer, and Bressant resumed his book.

'By the way, about this incognito of yours,' said the former at length, laying aside his pipe, and taking off his straw hat: he had forgotten to remove it on entering, and it had been oppressing him with a sense of vague inconvenience ever since. 'What is the meaning of it? Do you mean to keep it strict? Is the idea your own?'

'Oh no! I heard nothing of it till after my father was dead. It was Mrs. Vanderplanck—she who wrote you the letter—who first spoke to me of it, and said he had desired it. I don't know what the necessity of it is, but it must be kept a strict secret. Should anyone besides you know who I am, I stand in danger of losing my fortune.'

'Ah ha! lose your fortune!' exclaimed the Professor, frowning so portentously as to un-

seat his spectacles. 'How does that happen, sir?'

Bressant looked considerably amused at the old gentleman's evident emotion; the more as he saw no occasion for it. 'I never had the curiosity to ask how,' said he, pulling at his beard. 'I shall run no risks with my fortune. I'm satisfied to know there might be danger; there's no difficulty in keeping silence about a name.'

Professor Valeyon rose from his chair and walked to the window. A mighty host of grey clouds, piled thickly one upon another, and torn and tunneled by feverish wind-gusts, were hastening swiftly and silently across the sky from the west. Beyond, where they were thickest and angriest, a yellowish, lurid tint was reflected against them. The valley darkened like a frowning face, and the summits of the western hills were blotted out of sight. A lightning flash shivered brightly through the air, and then came the first growling, leaping, accumulating peal of thunder. A sudden, rustling breath swept through the garden, and following it, in big, quick drops, and soon in an unintermittent

myriad-footed tramp, the rustling, perpendicular down-pelting of the rain.

In less than a minute, a grey, wet veil had been drawn across the further side of the valley, hiding it from the Professor's sight. Even the outer limits of the garden grew indistinct. The leaves of the trees bobbed ceaselessly up and down, and glistened and dripped; the shrubs and flowers seemed to lift themselves higher from the earth, and stretch out their green fingers to the plenteous shower. The tinkle of the fountain was quite obliterated, and the ordinarily smooth surface of the basin sprang upward in thousands of tiny pyramids, as if madly welcoming the impact of the rain-drops. Small cataracts tore in desperate haste down the slope of the garden paths, laying bare in their pigmy fury the lower strata of rough gravel and pebbles. Upon the roof of the balcony was maintained an evenly sonorous monotone of drubbing, as if innumerable fairy carpenters were nailing on the shingles. The invalid water-spout had a hard time of it; it was racked, shaken, and bullied, and continually choked itself with the volubility of its fluent utterances,

which were instantly swallowed up in the bottomless depths of the waste-barrel. A strong, cool, earthy odour rose from the garden, and was wafted past the Professor's nostrils, and into the heated house. The moist brown flower-beds exhaled a fragrant thankfulness, and the grass-blades looked twice as green and twice as tall as before. Meanwhile the heavy, irregular pulse of the thunder had been beating intermittently overhead, and bounding ponderously from hill-side to hill-side; and ever and anon the lightning had showed startlingly in dazzling zig-zags through the omnipresent shadow. But now it seemed that there was a little less weight in the fall, and gloom in the air. The pervading freshness of the breeze made itself more unmistakeably perceptible. The west began to lighten, and the rain and darkness drifted to the east. As for Professor Valeyon, if his thoughts had been in a tumult, like the elements, might they not become quiet again, also?

'After all,' said the old gentleman to himself, 'it's not the young fellow's fault. If his father was a heartless scoundrel, it doesn't follow that he knows it. Well, the man is dead—it can't

be helped now, that's certain. But what a cunningly contrived plot it is! Shuts my mouth by confiding to me the incognito and sending me the son to educate; destroys the last hope of setting an old wrong right; takes advantage, for base ends, of the deepest feelings of human hearts:—not to speak of preventing the young man himself from being party to a noble and generous action. Did ever man carry such a load down to the grave!

'Suppose Margaret—No! it isn't likely she would know anything about it. He wasn't the man to make confidants of women. She gave the message to the son, not knowing what it meant, probably. Why, he wouldn't have dared to tell her! And then inviting Cornelia—no, no! I've had some acquaintance with Margaret, and with all her nonsense, I believe she's honest. Besides, what interest could she have to be otherwise? To be sure, she didn't give me the true reason for the incognito; but that's nothing; she's just the woman to tell a useless fib, and reserve the truth for important occasions only—or what she thinks such.'

The Professor remained for a while longer at the window, abstractedly staring at the drops

which hastened after one another from the wet eaves. Suddenly he turned around, and walked up to the table, flapping his slipper heels, and settling his spectacles, as he went.

'Did anyone ever speak to you of your mother, sir?' demanded he in the ear of the reading Bressant. 'Confound the fellow!' passed at the same time through his mind; 'does he think I'm a chair or a table?'

'My mother?' repeated the young man, looking up, and appearing somewhat surprised at the idea of his ever having possessed the article. 'Oh yes! my father once told me she was dead. It was long ago. I'd almost forgotten it.'

'Told you she was dead, hey? Humph! just what I expected!' growled the old gentleman, who seemed, however, to become additionally wrathful at the intelligence. After a moment's scowl straight at his would-be pupil, he shuffled up to his chair, and sat solidly down in it. Bressant (to whom the Professor had probably appeared to the full as peculiar as he to the Professor), seeing signs of an approach to business in his action and attitude, tossed his book on to the table, leaned forward with his

elbows on his knees, and fixed his eyes directly upon the old gentleman's glasses.

'You seem to be in the habit of speaking your own mind freely, sir,' observed the latter; 'and I shall do the same, on this occasion at least. I'm going to accept you as a pupil, and shall do my best for you; but you must understand it's by no means on your own account I do it. As far as I have seen them, I don't like your principles, your beliefs, or your nature. You're the last man I should pick out for a minister, or for any other responsible position. In every respect, except intelligence, and an unlimited confidence in yourself, you seem to me unfit to be trusted. In training you for the ministry, I shall do it with the hope—not the expectation—of instilling into you some true and useful ideas, and elevated thoughts. If I succeed, I shall have done the work of a whole church-full of missionaries. If I fail, I sha'n't recommend you to be ordained. And never forget that you will be indebted for all this to some one you've never known, and who, I am at present happy to say, don't know you. Whether or not you'll ever become acquainted is known to God alone, and I'm very glad that

the matter lies entirely in His hands. Now, sir, what have you to say?'

Bressant, who had been looking steadily and curiously at the Professor during the whole of this long speech, now passed his hand from his forehead down over his face and beard—a common trick of his—smiled meditatively, and said,

'I'm glad you agree to take me. I don't care for your recommendation if I have your instruction. Shall we begin to-morrow?'

There followed a discussion relative to hours, methods, and materials, which lasted very nearly until tea-time. Then, as there was still some rain falling, the Professor extended to his pupil an invitation to supper; on his accepting which the old gentleman shuffled out into the entry, and called to Cornelia to come down and make the necessary preparations.

CHAPTER V.

BRESSANT PICKS A TEA-ROSE.

SUPPER was ready: Cornelia surveyed the table for the last time, to make sure it was all right. It was an extension table, but the spare leaves had been removed, and it was reduced to a circle. A mellow western light from that portion of the sky unswathed in clouds streamed through the window, and did duty as a lamp. The cloth was white, and tapered down in soft folds at the corners; a pleasant profusion of sparkling china and silver, and of savoury eatables filled the circumference of the board, leaving just space enough to operate in, and no more. In the centre of the table, and perceptible both to eyes and nose on entering the room, was a tall glass dish, lined with wet green leaves, and pyramided with red strawberries. A comfortable steam ascended from the nose of the tea-pot, and vanished upwards in the gloom of the ceiling; the brown toast

seemed crackling to be eaten; the smooth-cut slices of marbled beef lay overlapping one another in silent plenteousness, and the knives and forks glistened to begin. Cornelia opened the entry-door, and called across to her papa in the study, that supper was ready. Then she took up her position behind her chair, with one hand resting on its back, and a silent determination that the visitor, whoever he was, should be impressed with her dignity, condescension, and good looks.

'This is my daughter Cornelia. Mr. Bressant is going to be a pupil of mine, my dear,' said the Professor, as he and Bressant advanced into the room.

He gave his hand an introductory wave in Cornelia's direction as he spoke, but probably did not speak loud enough to be distinctly heard by his guest. Nevertheless, seeing the motion and the lady, Bressant inclined forward his shoulders with an elastic readiness of bearing which was customary with him, in spite of his unusual stature, and then took his place at the table without bestowing any further attention upon her. It passed through Cornelia's mind, as she lifted the tea-pot, that Mr. Bres-

sant was outrageously conceited, and should be taken down at the first opportunity. She had made a very graceful courtesy, and it was not to be overlooked in that way with impunity.

'Milk and sugar, sir?' said she interrogatively, raising her eyes to the young man's face with a somewhat gratuitous formality of manner, and holding a piece of sugar suspended over the cup.

Bressant had certainly been looking in her direction as she spoke; he had the opposite place to her at table; but instead of replying, even with a motion of the head, he after a moment turned to Professor Valeyon, who was gently oscillating himself in the rocking-chair he always occupied at meals, and asked him whether he knew anything about a place in town called 'Abbie's Boarding-house.'

Cornelia laid down the sugar and tongs, and looked very insulted and flushed. What sort of a creature was this her papa had brought to his supper table? Papa, who had noticed the awkward turn, and was tickled by the humour thereof, could not forbear to give evidence of amusement; insomuch that his daughter, who was by no means of a lymphatic temperament, was

almost ready to leave the table, or burst into tears with injured and astonished dignity.

Bressant, with that exceeding quickness of perception which most persons with his infirmity possess under such circumstances, transferred his glance from the Professor to the young lady, and at once arrived at a pretty correct understanding of the difficulty. He was not embarrassed, for it had probably never occurred to him that his deafness was so much a defect as a difference of organisation, and he lost no time in explaining matters in his customary way.

'I'm deaf; when you talk to me you must speak loud,' said he, looking full at Cornelia's disturbed face.

Miss Valeyon had never been so thoroughly discomfited. She was smitten on three sides at once. Bad enough to be insulted; worse, having become properly angry, to find no insult was meant; and worst of all, to have been the means of drawing attention, by her bad temper, to a physical infirmity in her papa's guest. She abandoned upon the instant all intention of being ceremonious and imposing, and only thought how she might atone, to her papa and to Bressant, for her ill-behaviour.

He would not take tea—nothing but water; and as Cornelia proceeded in silence to pour out her papa's cup, the latter answered Bressant's question about the boarding-house.

'Know it very well, sir. Very good house. What have you heard about it?'

'Nothing more than that; I asked a man at the depôt. My trunk has been taken there. I'm satisfied if the woman "Abbie" is respectable, and gives me enough to eat.' The young man had accepted Cornelia's tender of a slice of beef, and seemed fully equal to doing it again.

'The "woman Abbie" respectable, sir!' exclaimed the Professor in half-muzzled ire; but he checked himself suddenly, and tried to be contented with shoving his plate, tumbler, and tea-cup, to and fro before him. 'I could not have recommended you to a better person,' he added presently, evidently putting a restraint upon himself. 'I have the highest—I hold her in very high estimation, sir.'

Bressant nodded, and presently took some more of the beef.

'Have you seen Abbie yet, Mr. Bressant?' enquired Cornelia in a timid tone, which, however, was deprived of all melody by the effort

to suit it to the young man's ears. But it was necessary to say something.

'Oh, no!' he replied, smiling at her in the pure good-nature of physical complacency, and noticing for the first time that she was an agreeable spectacle. He judged absolutely and primitively, never having had that experience of women which might have enabled him to make comparison the base of his opinion. 'I came right up here from the depôt. My trunk was sent to the boarding-house; it will hire a room for me, I suppose.'

At this sally, Cornelia smiled very graciously, though ten minutes before she would have snubbed it promptly. She had had some experience with the young men of the village—easy victims—and had acquired a rather good opinion of her satirical powers. But Bressant was a peculiar case; his deafness enlisted her compassion and forbearance, and her own late rudeness made her gentle. Perhaps the young gentleman was not so far out of the way in failing to consider his infirmity a disadvantage.

Meanwhile, Professor Valcyon was swinging backwards and forwards, ever and anon pausing to take a bite or a sup, and eyeing the stem of

the strawberry-dish in deepest contemplation. Cornelia, who from a combination of causes felt more embarrassed than ever in her remembrance, devoutly wished that he would rouse himself, and make some conversation. She did all she could, in the way of supplying the guest with eatables, and making little remarks upon them, to fill up awkward pauses; but she was conscious she was being stupid; and even when she thought of a good thing to say, the reflection that it must needs be shouted aloud made her pause until the available moment had gone by. It was some relief that Bressant ate well, and seemed in no way shy or cast down himself. There was a freshness and vivacity in his enjoyment of his supper which was pleasing to Cornelia for several reasons: it was evidently very far from being affected, was consequently indirectly complimentary to her, and showed a certain boyishness in him which contrasted very agreeably, or, as Cornelia would have said, 'cunningly,' with his mature and intellectual aspect. In fact, Bressant was in a particularly happy mood. The cool air and pleasant room, and the gratification of a healthy appetite, caused his senses to expand, and, as it were, sun

themselves. Cornelia's beauty could not have been presented under more favourable auspices, especially as woman's loveliness had heretofore been an unturned page in the young man's life. True, it pleased him in the same way as, and probably not to a greater degree, than would the symmetrical elegance of a vase, or the tinted beauty of a flower; but he had not yet known the limitless additional charm given by life, variety, and emotion. Would he ever know it? or was he so profoundly ignorant of the matter as to run in danger of finding it out unexpectedly, and perhaps too late?

The strawberry pyramid sank and disappeared. Cornelia began anxiously to wonder what was to be done now. Bressant sat enjoying his sensations, and Professor Valeyon, who appeared to have arrived at some definite conclusion after his meditations, rolled up his napkin and shoved it into the ring, previous to setting it down with that peculiar tap which announced that the meal was over.

On leaving the table, Bressant sauntered out of the room and on to the balcony, with a disregard of what other people might intend, which caused Cornelia to recollect her first impression

of him. Nevertheless, not knowing what else she could do, she followed, and found him leaning over the railing, and looking about him with serene enjoyment. The clouds had been mostly dispersed; a fresh air moved in the damp garden; and Cornelia was soon aware that the mosquitoes were abroad. Her muslin-covered arms and shoulders began to suffer.

Bressant raised himself at her approach, and stood with one hand against the railing, looking down upon her with a half-smile of interest and satisfaction, which made Cornelia feel not so much like a human being, as some rare natural curiosity which he was glad to have the opportunity of examining.

'You are one of the daughters?' said he, with the sudden scrutinising contraction of the eyebrows that often accompanied his questions. 'There are two, aren't there? Which one are you?'

'I'm Cornelia,' replied she, provoked, as the words left her mouth, that she had not said 'Miss Valeyon.' But the question had surprised her out of her presence of mind, and the necessity of speaking loud, if nothing else, hindered her from making the correction.

'Is the other anything like you?' resumed he, after a moment's more contemplation which, spite of its directness, had in it a certain element of unsophisticatedness that prevented it from seeming rude.

'Who, Sophie?' exclaimed the young lady, bursting forth into an unexpected gurgle of laughter, to which Bressant at once responded in kind, though having no idea what the merriment was about. 'I wish you could see her! There couldn't be a greater difference if I was a negro!'

The laugh died away in Bressant's eyes, and he pressed his hand rapidly down over his face, as if to sharpen his wits, or clear away cobwebs.

'That's natural,' he remarked, reflectively. 'I never saw anything like you.'

'If he'd said "any *body*,"' thought Cornelia, 'I should have said he meant to compliment. How funny he is! just like a boy in some ways. I believe I know more than he does, after all!'

'Have you any sisters, Mr. Bressant?' asked she aloud, looking up at him with more cordiality and confidence than she had yet felt or shown.

'Not any. I should think it would be a good thing. Do you like it?'

'Of course; but then I'm a sister myself, so it don't apply,' said Cornelia, with the sunshine of another laugh. It was delightful to look at her at such times; every part of her partook of the merriment, so that her hands, feet, and waist might all be said to laugh for themselves. Cornelia could express a great deal more in a bodily than in a spiritual way. Her material self, indeed, seemed so completely and bounteously endowed as to leave little place or occasion for a soul. The warm, rounded, fragrant, wholesome personality which met the eye, satisfied it; the harmonious tumult of life, that thrilled in every movement, was contentment to the other perceptions; the thought of a soul, bringing with it that other of death, was cold and inconsistent. Such mortal perfection loses its full effect, unless we can look upon it as physically immortal: as soon as we begin to refine our ideas into the abstract, we sully our enjoyment.

'But your mother must have given you some idea of what a sister would be,' continued Cornelia, presently.

'Would she? I wish I'd had one!' said the young man, unconscious that no such desire had ever entered his head till now, and yet at a loss to account for its presence. 'Mine died more than twenty years ago,' he explained.

'The poor boy! I believe he don't know what a woman is!' murmured Cornelia to herself, perhaps not displeased at the reflection that it lay with her to enlighten him. 'No wonder he looked at me as if I were a mammoth squash, or something. I'm going down in the garden to pluck a tea-rosebud,' added she aloud. 'Won't you come?'

'Yes,' said Bressant, following her down the glistening granite steps with an air of half-puzzled admiration. He liked his new sensations very much, but knew not what to make of them; and so had a sense of adventurous uncertainty, which was perhaps a pleasure in itself.

Cornelia walked down the path in front of him, picking her dainty steps to avoid stray spears of grass or weeds, and gathering up her light skirts in one hand, out of the way of the bushes which leaned lovingly forward to drop a tear upon her. At length she reached the tea-rosebush, and paused there. Bressant came up and stood beside her.

It was just dark enough to make the difference between a perfect and an imperfect bud a matter of some doubt. Cornelia peeped cautiously about, putting aside the wet twigs gingerly, and lifting up one flower after another; desisting every once in a while to slap at the fine sting of a mosquito on her arms or neck.

'Oh! there's one that looks nice!' exclaimed she, disposing her drapery to reach across the bush for a distant bud which looked in every respect satisfactory. But Bressant saw it, and plucked it without effort, drawing blood from his finger as he did so, however. He smelt it, and looked from it to Cornelia, apparently trying to identify an idea.

'Aren't you going to give me my bud?' demanded Miss Valeyon. 'What's the matter, sir?'

'In some way it reminds me of you,' replied he, giving it to her with a shake of the head. 'I don't see how, but it does!'

Cornelia gave him a sharp side-look, to make out if he were sincere; but his face at the moment was in shadow.

'Perhaps because it pricked your finger,' said she.

She had not spoken loud, and was almost startled when his reply showed he had heard her. There was again that expression of marvellous efficiency and power in his face and bearing, but combined with one partly doubt and partly shrewd scrutiny.

'I plucked the bud all the same,' he remarked. Cornelia, for some reason, felt a little provoked and a little frightened. He wasn't entirely unsophisticated after all; and she felt quite uncertain where the ignorance ended and the knowledge began. She put the bud in her hair, and they walked on, Bressant being now at her side, instead of behind. The path was hardly wide enough for two, and now and then she felt her shoulder touch his arm. Every time this happened, she fancied her companion gave a kind of involuntary start, and looked around at her with a quick, enquiring expression. Fancied, for she did not meet his look, being herself conscious of a sort of irregularity of the breath and pulse attending these contacts, which she could not understand, and did not feel altogether at ease about. Certainly, there was something odd in this Bressant! Cornelia hardly knew whether he strongly repelled or

powerfully attracted her. She had half a mind to run back to the house.

At this moment, however, they arrived at the fountain, and stood silently contemplating its weak, persistent struggles. The heavy rain had not raised its spirits a whit; but neither had it lessened its sense of duty to be performed. It laboured just as hard, if no harder than ever.

Presently, Bressant walked round to the opposite side of the basin, shook himself and stamped his feet, like one overcoming a feeling of drowsiness, and then, stooping down, put his hand in the water and brought some up to his forehead. It passed through Cornelia's mind that she had read in her 'Natural Philosophy,' at school, that water was a good conductor of electricity, but she could not establish any clear connection between her remembrance of this fact and Bressant's action. The results of thoughts often present themselves to us, when the processes remain invisible.

'What an absurd little fountain!' observed he, coming round again to Cornelia, and looking down upon her with a smile that seemed to call for a responsive one from her. 'What is the use of it?'

'Oh, we're used to it, you know; and then that little sound it makes is pleasant to listen to.'

'Is it?' said Bressant, apparently struck by the idea. 'I should like to hear it. "A pleasant sound!" I never thought of a sound being pleasant.'

'Poor fellow!' thought Cornelia again, with a strong impulse of compassion and kindliness. 'What a dreary life, not even to know that sounds were beautiful. I suppose all the voices he hears must be harsh and unnatural, and those are the only kinds of sounds he would attend to.' Looking at him from this new point of view, the feeling of mistrust and uncertainty of a few minutes before was forgotten. Standing near the margin of the basin was a rustic bench, fantastically made of curved and knotted branches, the back and arms contrived in rude scroll-work, and the seat made of round transverse pieces, through whose interstices the rain-water had passed, leaving it comparatively dry. Cornelia sat down upon it, and motioned Bressant to take his place by her side. As he did so, she could not help a slight thrill of dismay. He was so very big, and took up so much room!

Bressant sat looking straight before him, and said nothing. Stealing a side-glance at him, Cornelia was possessed by an absurd fancy that he was alarmed at his position. The idea of being able to scare such a giant excited the young lady's risibilities so powerfully that she could not contain herself, but, to her great horror, broke suddenly forth into a warbling ecstasy of laughter. Bressant looked around in great surprise. It was an occasion for presence of mind. Something must be done at once.

'Hush! hold perfectly still! It was so absurd to see you sitting there and not knowing! There—now—still!' *Spat!*

A mosquito which after considerable reconnoitering, had settled upon Bressant's broad hand, had sacrificed its life to rescue Cornelia from her dilemma.

Bressant felt the soft warm fingers strike smartly, and then begin to remove, cautiously and slowly, because the mosquito was possibly not dead after all. What was the matter with the young man? His blood and senses seemed to quiver and tingle with a sensation at once delicious and confusing. In the same instant,

he had seized the soft warm fingers in both his hands, and pressed them convulsively and almost fiercely. Cornelia very naturally cried out, and sprang to her feet. Bressant, it would seem not so naturally, did the same thing, and with the air of being to the full as much astonished and startled as she.

'What do you mean, sir? how dare you ——?' she said, paling after her first deep flush.

He looked at her, and then at his own hand, on which the accommodating mosquito was artistically flattened, and then at her again, with a slight, interrogative frown.

'How did it happen? What was it? I didn't mean it!'

Cornelia was quite at a loss what to do or say under such extraordinary circumstances. She felt short of breath, and indignant; but she had never heard of a young man's questioning a lady as to how he had come to take a liberty with her. As she stood thus confounded, her unfortunate perception of the ludicrous betrayed her once more; but this time her recent shock played a part in it, and came very near pro-

ducing a bad fit of hysterics. Bressant looked on without a word or a motion.

In less than a minute, for Cornelia's nerves were very strong and had never been overtaxed, she had regained command of herself. Bressant was standing between her and the house, and she pointed up the path.

'Please go home as quickly as possible.'

Off he walked with every symptom of readiness and relief. Cornelia followed after, but when she reached the house, she found her papa staring enquiringly out of his study door; the uncanny pupil in divinity had disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

CORNELIA BEGINS TO UNDO A KNOT.

BRESSANT, to do him justice—for he was on the whole rather apt to be polite than otherwise in his way—entirely forgot the Professor's existence for the time being. He was too self-absorbed to think of other people. He thought he was bewitched, and felt a strong and healthy impulse to throw off the witchery before doing anything else. He sprang up the steps, across the balcony, traversed the hall with a quick tramp that shook the house, snatched his hat from the old hat-tree, came down upon the porch step (which creaked in a paroxysm of reproach at his unaccustomed weight), and in another moment stood outside the parsonage gate, which, to save time, he had leaped instead of opening.

The road was white no longer, but brown and moist. The sky overhead was deep purple, and full of stars. The air wafted about hither

and thither in little cool, damp puffs, which were a luxury to inhale. Bressant drew in two or three long lungfuls; then setting his round, straw hat more firmly on his head, he leant slightly forward, and launched himself into a long swinging run.

To run gracefully and well is a rare accomplishment, for it demands a particularly well-adjusted physical organisation, great strength, and a deep breath-reservoir. Bressant's body poised itself lightly between the hips, and swayed slightly but easily from side to side at each spring. The knees alternately caught the weight without swerving, and shifted it with an elastic toss from one to the other. The feet came down sharp and firm, and springily spurned the road in a rapid, though rhythmical succession. In a few moments the turn around the spur of the hill was reached, and the runner was well settled down to his pace.

The stone fences, the occasional apple trees, the bushes and bits of rock bordering the road, slipped by half-seen. The full use of the eyes was required for the path in front, rough as it was with loose stones, and seamed with irregular ruts. Easy work enough, however, as

long as it remained level, and open to the starlight. But some distance beyond there dipped a pretty abrupt slope, and here was need for care and quickness. Sometimes a step fell short or struck one side, to avoid a stone; or lengthened out to overpass it. The whole body was thrown more back, and the heels dug solidly into the earth at each downward leap. Here and there, where the incline was steeper, four or five foot-tramps followed rapidly upon each other; and then, gathering himself up with a sudden strong clutch, as it were, the young man continued on as before. Thus the slope was left behind, and now began a low, long stretch, lying between meadows, overshadowed by a bordering of willow-trees, and studded with lengths of surreptitious puddles; for the ground was clayey, and the rain was unabsorbed. As Bressant entered upon it, he felt the cold moisture of the air meet his warm face refreshingly; he was breathing deep and regularly, and now let himself out to a yet swifter pace than before.

The willow trees started suddenly from the forward darkness, and vanished past in a dusky twinkling. The road seemed drawn in swift

smooth lines from beneath his feet, he moving as in a mighty treadmill. The breeze softly smote his forehead, and whispered past his ears. Now he rose lightly in the air over an unexpected puddle, striking the further side with feet together, and so on again. Twice or thrice his steps sounded hollowly over a plank bridging. At a distance, steadily approaching, appeared the outlet, light against the dark willow setting. When it was reached, ensued a rough acclivity, hard for knees and lungs, winding upwards for a considerable distance. Up the runner went, with seemingly untired activity, and the stones and sand spurted from beneath his ascending feet. The air became drier and warmer again as he mounted, and the meadows slept beneath him in their clammy darkness.

Near the brow of the hill stood a farmhouse, black against the sky. Bressant marked the light through the curtained window, dimly bringing out a transverse strip of road; the pump standing over its trough with uplifted arm and dangling cup; the rambling shed, with the waggon half-hidden beneath it; the barn, with blank windowless front, and shingled

roof. A dog barked sharply at him, as he echoed by, but inaudibly to Bressant's ears. Presently a raised sidewalk divided off from the road, affording a smoother course; the outlying houses of the village slipt past one after another; a white picket-fence twittered indistinguishably by. The runner was nearing the end of his journey, and now leant a little further forward, and his feet fell in a quicker rhythm than ever.

At the beginning of the village street stood the corner grocery; a wooden awning in front, some men loafing at the door, who looked up as the sound of Bressant's passing struck their ears; within, an indistinct vision of barrels of produce, hams pendant from the dusky ceiling, some brooms in a corner, a big cheese upon the counter. Next succeeded the series of adjoining shop-fronts, with their various windows, signs, and styles; all wooden and clap-boarded, however, except the fire-engine house, of red brick, with its wide central door and boarded slope to the street. Bressant's steps echoed closely back from between the buildings; once he clattered sharply over a stretch of brick side-walk; once dodged aside to avoid overrunning a dark-figured man. The village was left behind;

yonder stood the boarding-house, dimly white and irregular of outline; he remembered it from the glimpse he had had in passing on his way from the depôt. In a few quick moments more he stood before the door, glowing warm from head to foot, drawing his deep breath easily, his blood flowing in full, steady beats through heart and veins. He took off his hat, passed his handkerchief over forehead and face, and then pulled the tinkling door-bell. A fat Irish girl presently appeared, and ushered him in with a stare and a grin, wiping her hands upon her apron.

Meanwhile Cornelia, having said a few words to her father to excuse Bressant's unceremonious departure—she refrained instinctively from letting him know what had actually taken place—bade him good night, and went upstairs with a more sober step than was her wont. She tapped at Sophie's door, and stayed just long enough to make the necessary arrangements for the night. Sophie, being drowsy, asked but few questions, and received brief replies. When Cornelia reached her own room, she closed the door with a feeling of relief. It had never been her habit to fasten her door; but to-night, after

advancing a few paces into the chamber, she hesitated, turned back, and drew the bolt. Then, having hastily pulled down the curtains, she seemed for the first time to be free from a sensation of restraint.

She walked up to the dressing-table, which was covered with a disorderly medley of a young lady's toilet articles—comb and brush, a paper of pins, ribbons, a brooch, a little vase for rings, an open purse, a soiled handkerchief—and began mechanically to undo her hair, and shake out the braids. It was dark brown hair, not soft and delicately fine like Sophie's, but vigorous and crisp, each hair seeming to be distinct, and yet harmonising with the rest. As it was loosened and fell voluminously spreading over her shoulders, she paused, resting against the table, and looked at her face in the glass with critical earnestness. The candle, standing at one side of the mirror, cast soft and deep shadows beneath the darkly defined eyebrows, and against the straight line of the nose, and around the clear, short curves of the mouth and upper lip. The light rested tenderly on her firm oval cheeks, so deep-toned, yet pale, and brought out an almost invisible dimple on each cheek-

bone beneath the eye, usually only to be distinguished when she laughed or smiled. The forehead, so far as it could be seen beneath the hair, was smooth and straight, neither high nor especially wide. The ears were small and white, but rather too much cut away below to be in perfect proportion. Over all seemed spread a mellow, rich, transparent, laughing medium, that was better than beauty, and without which beauty would have seemed cold and tame, or at least passionless. There was a delicate mystery in the face, too, not conscious or self-woven, but of that impalpable and involuntary sort which sometimes looks from the eyes of young unmarried women, whose natures have developed sweetly and freely, without warping or forcing. It has nothing to do with religion, nor with what we commonly understand by spirit. It is not to be described or analysed; like the blue of heaven, it is the infinitely elusive property which is the very secret and necessity of its existence.

Cornelia looked searchingly at this face, and though much of its subtlest charm must necessarily have been lost upon her, she saw a great deal that gave her pleasure. She had never

been subjected to that awakening but coarsening process which teaches a girl to call herself a beauty; but there is a certain amount of instinctive perception in these matters, and she could not but know that what had virtue to gratify her, would not lack in effect over others. Nor was she in the habit of taking stock of herself in the looking-glass; only to-night she seemed to have an especial motive in making, or renewing her own acquaintance.

At length she dropped her eyes, and with nimble fingers and swiftly applied hair-pins, wound up her hair into its nocturnal knot. She removed her earrings and rings, and put them into the vase; but here reverie overtook her once more, and held her in a meditative half-smile, until consciousness revived, and startled the blood into her cheeks. She walked over to her little sofa, with despatch and business in her step, and sat down to unlace her boots.

There is something in these little ever-recurring actions, however—these things which we do so often as to do them unconsciously—which predisposes to thought and reflection. Cornelia, having untied the knot, had not got further than the fourth hole from the top, her eyes

meanwhile wandering slowly around the picturesque but rather disorderly little room, before she became dreamily interested in watching the shadow of a neck-scarf she had hung upon the support of the looking-glass, projected upon the wall by the flickering light of the candle. As she looked, her fingers began to labour upon the boot-lace, and her eyes grew gradually larger and darker. Occasionally there were little quiverings of the upper and under lids, barely perceptible movements of the tip of the nose and the nostrils, and twitching at the mouth corners. By-and-bye the twitchings resolved themselves into a smile, very faint and far away at first, but broadening and brightening every moment; now, the dimples were visible at half a glance, and now, upon the still air of the chamber, there rippled forth——

Cornelia put her hand to her mouth, and gave a quick furtive glance over her shoulder, as if in fear lest some one might have overheard her. She recollected with some relief that the door was locked at any rate, and the curtains down. But for all that, as she realised what she had been thinking about, and how very far her papa, or Sophie, would be from laughing if

they were told about it, she felt her cheeks tingle, and could not be busy enough with that boot-lace!

There! that was off; now for the other. What a queer man he was, though! Could all that have been put on in the garden—pretending he didn't know? (This was such a tiresome old knot!) If she only hadn't been such a goose and laughed—what must he think? What could have been the reason he rushed off in such a hurry? Probably was afraid she'd tell papa, and then he couldn't be his pupil. Suppose she should tell! that would be mean though. Perhaps he didn't intend it, after all. He seemed nice in some ways, though he was so queer. Very likely it was only a sort of spasm —an electric, magnetic thing—she had heard of something of the sort. Yes, and she had felt funny herself that evening—a numb, quivery, prickly kind of sensation: it may have been the thunderstorm! It was strange though; she never remembered to have felt it before. She wondered whether Mr. Bressant ever had. Perhaps deaf people were more subject to it. What a pity he should be deaf. It made it so awfully embarrassing to talk to him sometimes.

It must be dreadful for them to be in love with anybody. Imagine having to talk in that way to a deaf person! or being——

This time it was the candle which took upon itself the task of warning and censorship. It flickered, flared, gasped, and went out. It was a very pathetic, and, it is to be hoped, effective way of remonstrance. But the last thing seen of Cornelia, she was sitting on the sofa, leaning carelessly forward, one hand holding her curved, little, booted foot, the knot still untied, her eyes fixed dreamily on nothing, the half-smile flickering on her lips, and the womanly contours of her figure doubtfully lighted and darkly shaded by the uncertain candle-light.

CHAPTER VII.

PROFESSOR VALEYON MAKES A CALL.

THE morning following Bressant's arrival was clear and cool. Professor Valeyon looked out of the window of his bed-room, which was at the garden end of the house, and opposite Cornelia's, and saw the cold white mists lying in the valley, and the rough hills, like islands, lifting their dark shoulders above it.

As he looked, the sun, having climbed a few inches above the eastern uplands, let a bright glance fall right upon the open spot at the summit of the Professor's favourite hill. A few minutes afterwards he poured a golden flood into the valley, carrying consternation to the delaying vapours, insomuch that they straightway put themselves into commotion preparatory to departure. No spare time was allowed them; some were bundled off into the dark gullies and passes of the hills; others betook themselves hastily to that side of the valley

which was yet in shadow, to sleep a few moments beyond the legitimate time; others still, finding escape impossible, rose heavenward like a mighty incense, and were by the sun converted into something well-nigh as glorious as himself.

'Good simile for a sermon, that! turning persecution into a means of glorification!' thought the Professor, recurring to the days of his pastorship.

As may be inferred, the old gentleman was in the habit of getting up early; a praiseworthy practice, but one so universal with elderly people as to suggest a doubt of its being entirely a voluntary virtue. Be that as it may, the Professor was up, and proceeded to set his blood in motion over a wash-bowl. His toilet was not so intricate and serious a matter as it might have been forty years or so previous, but was nevertheless a duty most scrupulously and conscientiously performed, from June to December and round again. The last thing attended to before putting on his coat was always carefully to brush and dispose his hair. Until within two or three years, he had been able to keep up appearances by coaxing a grey

rift across the top of the bald place; but it had grown month by month thinner and greyer, and more difficult to keep in position, until at last he had bravely told himself it was a vanity and a delusion, and had consigned it to obscurity and oblivion among the rusty side-locks which still sturdily surrounded the naked and inaccessible summit. Since that time he had occasionally allowed his thoughts to revert to it regretfully, though not bitterly nor rebelliously. But on this particular morning he stood, brush in hand, before his looking-glass with an expression upon his elderly features at once undecided, wistful, and shame-faced; detached, after a short search, a few frosty spears from the assortment at the left side of his head; scrutinized them anxiously for a moment, and then, by the aid of a little water, and cautious brushing and pulling, succeeded in spatting them down into their long abandoned place.

'I'm 'an old fool, that's certain!' muttered he, as, after a final surreptitious sort of glance at the unaccustomed embellishment, he turned away. 'But then I don't go out calling every day!'

He slipped on his coat, opened his door, and

descended the stairs with his usual soli-
beration. As he emerged upon the bal
the sunshine had just lighted up the tree-to
the garden, but a little nest of white mist
rested upon the fountain, whose indefatiga
small gabble could be heard proceeding m
teriously from the centre thereof. A few larg
thin mosquitoes, cold and portentously hungr
from their all-night's fast, came swooping at the
Professor with shrieks of dismal tenuity, in-
tending to get a warm breakfast out of him.
But he had had large experience in dealing
with such gentry, and so far from standing
treat, he slew several and threw the rest into
confusion.

'And now,' said he to himself, as he de-
scended the steps, 'I'll take a look at Dolly;
Michael hasn't let out Lady Bountiful or the
hens yet, I expect.'

The barn lay in a separate enclosure to the
west of the garden; it was a primitive struc-
ture enough, but had been refitted within so as
to afford accommodation for the family steed and
the cow. The former, Dolly, was a well-pre-
served bay, neatly put together, and, had the
Professor been so inclined, she might have

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a celebrity in her day. As it was, d seen no more stirring duty than to y her owner to and from church, dur- he years of his ministrations there; to the plough and the hay-cart occasionally, to gallop over the rough country roads eath the side-saddle, for the benefit of Cor- lia or Sophie. She was at this time about fteen years old, but still retained much of the spirit of her best days, and not unfrequently gave the Professor some pains to keep her within bounds.

He threw open the barn door, and forth upon the crisp air floated the close, sweet smell of hay and cow's breath. Some swallows twittered and glanced up near the dark roof, as smart and wide-awake as if they had not just been startled out of bed. The sun, shining through the cracks and knot-holes into the dusky interior, drew lines of dusty light across the darkness. A hen, who had escaped from the coop and got up into the hay-loft to lay an egg, set up a strongly-remonstrative cackle against being disturbed in so interesting a proceeding. Lady Bountiful lowed argumentatively, and Dolly stamped, wagged her head

knowingly up and down, and then sho with a whinny. The Professor patted her and smoothed down her nose.

'Need some exercise, don't you, old girl quoth he, looking pleasantly upon her. 'A right! we'll go down town after breakfas Yes! we'll make a call on Abbie.' So saying he pulled down some fresh hay, and left her to champ it; then, picking his way across the uneven floor to where the white and horned countenance of Lady Bountiful was thrust through the bars of her stall, he slipped her halter and let her out into the meadow. Having examined the waggon, to make sure it was in proper order, he concluded his labours by throwing open the hen-coop, out of which immediately hastened a troop of indignant and astonished fowls, led by a rooster, who seemed always to be vacillating between insufferable masculine arrogance and an effeminate curiosity and avarice.

By the time Professor Valeyon had remounted the granite steps, he was quite ready to do justice to his breakfast. Cornelia came singing downstairs, with a full blown tea-rose in her hair, and looking as if she had already breakfasted upon the greater part of the day's sun-

She reported Sophie to be awake and rtable, so the gentleman climbed upstairs shuffled into her peaceful, rose-coloured m to give her a morning kiss. The Lord's yer glowed forth as brightly from the wall if it had been pronounced for the first time at day.

'Well-heard all about my new pupil from Cornelia, I suppose?' said papa, when the kiss had been given, sitting down by the bedside, and holding his daughter's pale, slender hand in his own.

'He who came last evening? No, I've not seen Neelie to speak to her, since he was here. What is he to be taught?'

'Wants to be a minister,' replied the Professor, rubbing his beard. 'Shall do what I can for him, because he's the son of a former friend, now dead. I'm afraid he won't do, though. Needs a good deal besides Hebrew and History.'

'But you can give him all he does need, papa,' rejoined Sophie, with serene faith in the old gentleman's infallibility.

'I don't know,' returned he, his eyes resting upon the Lord's Prayer. 'I don't know,' he repeated, turning them to his daughter's trans-

parent face, which seemed almost an incarnation of the divine words. 'I think, my dear, that you could put some ideas into his head that would do him more good than anything I can give him;' and he smiled gravely upon her.

'All right, papa,' said Sophie, gaily, with a tender kindling of her soft, grey eyes. 'Nothing could make me happier than to do good to somebody. As soon as I get well enough, I'll take him under my charge.'

Her manner was playful, but there was a vibration in her tone which caught the Professor's ear, and conveyed to him the idea that there was an unseen depth of yearning and passionate desire to be something more than an invalid, selfish and helpless, during her earthly life; an inheritance, perhaps, of the apostolic spirit which had played a not inconsiderable part in the history of his own life. And surely, he may have thought, there never was human being better qualified than she to inspire to high and pure simplicity of life and thought, were it merely by the example of her own. And would it not be a strange and beautiful thing if this beloved daughter of his should be the means of turning to worthier and truer

ambitions a man whom, of all others, he had reason to wish honoured and respected among mankind! It was a very alluring thought, and the Professor quite lost himself for a few moments in the contemplation of it. He did not reflect, and Sophie could not know that there might be danger in the prosecution of such a scheme; for all the knowledge which a young girl like her can have or impart, must find its ultimate origin in the heart. But then, again, the matter had taken no definite or practical shape in his mind as yet, and things which in the abstract may wear an appearance of being highly desirable often put on quite a different look when presented in concrete form. This would be especially the case with a man like Professor Valeyon, who was half a dreamer and half a practical, common-sensible individual. With Sophie, however, whose whole life was necessarily a tissue of delicate and high-wrought theories, there was no safe-guard of the kind to be relied upon.

No more conversation was had upon the subject at that time. The Professor went down to his breakfast, and having disposed of it with good appetite, and smoked his morning pipe

with quiet satisfaction, Michael brought Dolly and the waggon round to the front door, the old gentleman clambered in, and off they rattled to Abbie's boarding-house.

This 'Abbie,' as she was called in the village —indeed, not more than one in a hundred knew her other name—had long been an institution among the townspeople. When she first became a resident was uncertain; some said more, some less than twenty years ago. Certain it was, at all events, that she had grown, during her sojourn there, from a young and comely, though sober-faced woman, to considerably more than middle age; though time had perhaps used her less kindly than most women in her situation of life, which is saying a good deal. No one could tell where she came from, or what her previous life had been. She had first made her appearance as purchaser of the house in which she had ever since lived and kept boarders. She was uncommunicative, without seeming offensively reserved; quietly tenacious of her rights, though far from grasping or aggressive, and was endowed with decided executive ability. She had made a most unexceptionable landlady; one or two of her

boarders had been with her almost since the inception of her enterprise; while all the better class of transient visitors to the village, which had a moderate popularity as a summer resort, made their first application for rooms to her.

Some ten or twelve years after her establishment, Professor Valeyon and his family had moved into town. They had not taken up their quarters at Abbie's, though she could easily have accommodated them, as far as room went; a circumstance which caused all the more surprise in some quarters, because there seemed to have been some previous acquaintance between herself and the Professor. But Abbie was even less talkative upon this than upon other subjects; and no one ventured to catechise the grave and forcible-looking man who was the only other source of possible information. After a time, he settled in the house which subsequently became the Parsonage; and since no particular relations were kept up between his family and the boarding-house keeper, curiosity and comment died a natural death, and it even came to be doubted whether they ever had met each other before, after all.

Abbie, at the present time, was a taciturn personage, neither tall nor short, stout nor thin. Her eyebrows were straight and strongly marked, and much darker than her hair, which, indeed, had begun to turn grey several years before. There was nothing especially noticeable in her other features, except that the lips were habitually compressed, and the chin so square-cut and firm as to be almost masculine. A good many little wrinkles could be traced around the mouth, and at the corners of the eyes, especially when she was much depressed; and sometimes her expression was very hard and stern. Her manners were quite undemonstrative; they seemed to be neither fastidious nor the reverse, and it would have been hard to predicate from them in what station of life she had been brought up. She certainly adapted herself well to whatever society she happened to be with; neither patricians nor plebeians found anything to criticise; but whether this were the result of tact, or owing merely to the adoption of a negative standard, no one could say. In language she was uniformly correct, without seeming at all scholastic; she occasionally used the idioms and dialectic

peculiarities of those around her, though never with the air of being heedlessly betrayed into them.

On the whole, therefore, the boarding-house keeper remained a problem or a common-place, according to the fancy of the observer. In any case, she had grown to be a necessity, if not a popular element, in the village society. It was in her large rambling rooms that all the grand parties and social celebrations took place. Was a picnic or other pleasure expedition in prospect, Abbie's experience and managing ability were depended on for its success. She it was who arranged the details of weddings; and her assistance was almost as necessary a condition of a legitimate funeral, as that of Death himself!

Professor Valcyon drove up to the door in his waggon, got down with all the care that the successful support of his burden of years demanded, and chained Dolly to the much-gnawed post which was fixed for the purpose on the edge of the side walk. He ascended the steps and was met by Abbie on the threshold. He removed his hat with old-fashioned courtesy and gave her cold hand a quiet, warm grasp.

'Good-morning, Abbie,' said he, gruffly, but cheerfully, and with a very kind look out of his deep-set old eyes. 'Is all well with you this morning?'

'Yes,' replied she, with a faint smile, that seemed to show more of weariness than of merriment. 'Come into the boudoir, Professor Valeyon. You're a stranger.'

'But that's going to be remedied—that's going to be remedied!' rejoined the old gentleman, seating himself, and allowing his hand to wander to the top of his head, to make sure the hair-swathe was safely in position. 'Bond of union been established between us, you know.'

Abbie laid her finger upon her under lip—a common act of hers when interested or absorbed—and looked at her caller enquiringly.

'That young fellow that came last night, sent his trunk up before coming himself. Saw him, did'nt you?'

Abbie shook her head. 'I saw his trunk, but not him. Mr. Bressant, I think. You know him?'

'He's going to study divinity with me. I take some interest in him, though he's in an unsatisfactory condition just now; intellectual

savagery, I should call it. I take it, his training has been at fault. Seems to have no social nor affectionate instincts. It would be a good thing to make him feel their value, to begin with.'

'I'll make it as homelike for him as I can, Professor Valeyon.'

'Well, well! I meant to ask you to do it It'll be a new experience for him. He's never known a mother since he was a baby, and his father was—well!' the old man checked himself,—'his father is just dead.' He seemed about to add something more in regard to the deceased gentleman, but forbore, glancing narrowly at Abbie, who looked only grave and thoughtful.

'How old is he? A boy?' She asked presently.

'Boyish in some ways, but must be twenty-five or six, and looks older. A tall fellow, well made.'

He might still be a son of mine,' said Abbie, with another dim smile, and a sigh. 'Perhaps it would do me no harm to consider him as such. Would that satisfy you?'

'Just what I want!' exclaimed the Professor heartily, and with heightened colour. 'Some-

thing can be made of him, I think,' he added; 'but a great deal depends on the sort of treatment he eats and sleeps under. Well, you be motherly to him, Abbie. That's all I have to ask. You will find good in it for yourself too, as you say: more than you think, very likely.'

She sighed again, playing absently with her fingers upon her dark-coloured dress, and gazing out of the window. Professor Valeyon said no more on the subject of Bressant, but spoke of Cornelia's proposed trip, and the Fourth of July party, and Sophie's convalescence; and finally took his straw hat from the table upon which he had placed it, and moved towards the door.

'Good-bye, Abbie. Remember'—the old gentleman paused, with her hand in his, and glowing upon her from beneath his bushy eyebrows; 'remember you have friends about you who don't need to be sought after. And another thing, Abbie; if you should ever find that time has the power to liberate as well as to imprison you, don't forget that some wants may exist a long while without finding expression, but that they do exist, for all that!'

Perhaps it was the consciousness that he was

using rather grandiloquent language in the wording of this enigmatical little speech, that caused the good Professor to look so red and embarrassed. Abbie drew her hand away, and laid her finger on her lip.

'Can you still say that?' asked she, with a sad kind of gleam in her eyes and voice.

'More than ever—more than ever!' declared he, with emphatic incoherence. And without more words he hurried down the steps, and in another minute was rattling rapidly homewards, astonishing Dolly herself by the speed which he encouraged her to put forth.

'It'll all work round, soliloquised he; 'very good beginning this. If I could have spoken more explicitly—but she'll be prepared, and that's a great step towards clearing things up. Gee up! Dolly.'

CHAPTER VIII.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

'SOPHIE,' said Cornelia, several days afterwards, 'do you know, I believe I'll stay for that party at Abbie's after all.'

The two sisters were engaged in planning out an evening dress, and Sophie's bed was so covered with the confusion thereof, that her quiet little face, appearing above, looked odd by contrast.

'I'm glad,' replied she, with the simplicity and lack of ornamentation that made her words forcible; 'and I'm sure Abbie will be glad too.'

'There's no reason why I shouldn't, you know,' resumed the elder sister, falling into that pleasing vein of argument wherein we consciously express the views of our interlocutor; 'a few days won't make any difference to Aunt Margaret, and I wouldn't like to have poor old Abbie think that I slighted her, just because I am going to enter New York society! Besides, I think this dress will look very nice when it's finished—don't you?'

'Yes, dear,' said Sophie, smiling to herself. 'Is Mr. Bressant going to the party?'

'Oh, I don't know. No, I should suppose not. He's a great student, you know, and is going to be a minister and everything. That isn't the sort of people that takes interest in parties. Besides, he couldn't hear the music, so of course he couldn't dance.'

'Some deaf people can hear music, and even compose it.'

'Can they? But then just imagine having to talk to a deaf person in a ball-room! it would be awfully embarrassing, don't you think so?'

Sophie, who knew her sister well, and was very shrewd besides, began to suspect that it would not be displeasing to Cornelia to be opposed and even out-argued upon the question of Mr. Bressant's probable attendance at the party, and qualifications to make himself agreeable when there. She enjoyed the amusement, in her demure way, and was besides interested to hear something about her father's pupil.

'I should think,' said she, in a modestly suggestive manner, keeping her eyes busy with her work, 'that it would be less embarrassing at a party than anywhere. You know everybody

expects to say and hear nothing but nonsense, and there isn't a great deal said even of that. And you're obliged to talk loud at any rate, on account of the music and noise.'

'Well, you may be right,' admitted Cornelia, who certainly did take her sister's opposition with admirable good nature. 'And I was thinking, Sophie, perhaps if they're not very deaf indeed, you know they might get so used to the sound of one's voice as to hear it even when it wasn't so much raised.'

'Why, certainly!' assented Sophie; 'to some kinds of voices, at any rate; probably to a woman's more easily than to a man's. Is Mr. Bressant very deaf, Neelie?'

Cornelia glanced quickly at her sister, but was reassured by the grave composure of her aspect. Nevertheless, she was deeply engrossed in her new dress as she made reply.

'Oh! no. Well, not so very; I can hardly tell, though, I've spoken to him so little. He's rather quick at catching your meaning, sometimes, I think.'

'Do you think he's a man who would get married?'

'Oh! I don't believe he'll ever be married,'

said Cornelia, and blushed, she scarce knew why. 'No woman would marry him.'

'Is he so disagreeable?'

Cornelia moved her shoulders in a little shudder. 'Oh, not that exactly; but he's so cold and bright and hard. And he isn't always that way, either. There are times when he's so strange—so different! I don't believe he understands himself then. There seems to be a wild fire in him, that once in awhile blazes up, and scorches and frightens him, as well as other people.'

Sophie was perhaps more interested in this extravaganza of Cornelia's than if she had known the incident upon which it was mainly founded; but on the other hand, it is possible that less exaggerated language would not have given her so correct an idea of Bressant's character. Cornelia—there being nothing else to especially occupy her thoughts—had allowed them to run a good deal upon Bressant, and upon what happened by the fountain in the garden: perhaps she had mingled the real things and events with the fantasies of her dreams, and thus built up an impression and theory in regard to the young man considerably more picturesque than was

warranted by the premises at her command. All this would have been done involuntarily; and possibly Sophie's question elicited the first conscious perception and statement of what Cornelia's opinion had grown to be. But unconscious judgments are often more accurate than deliberate ones, because there is more of intuition about them.

Be that as it may, from the moment Sophie imbibed the idea that there was something strange, fierce, and ungovernable in Bressant's nature, she felt her sympathy and interest moved and aroused. It was the instinctive attraction of one strong spirit towards another, the more, because that other was so differently embodied, endowed, and circumstanced. She was a bedridden invalid, but she thrilled, like Achilles, at the first gleam and clangor of arms. The only thing that Sophie feared, and from which she shrank, was Sin. All else attracted her in proportion as it was powerful, stirring, or awe-inspiring. Delicate, sensitive, and apparently meek and timid as was her nature, her heart was firm as a Roman general's, and her soul as large and sympathetic as an Apostle's. Did the occasion offer, this pale minister's

daughter was capable of great and immortal deeds.

'Which way do you like him best, Neelie?' demanded she at length, removing the dilated gaze of her grey eyes from the round knot on the top of the bedpost; 'when he's cold and bright, or when he's wild and fiery.'

Oh! I don't like him at all!' exclaimed Cornelia, shuddering again.

Lest she should be suspected of a wilful misstatement, it may be as well to show how it might happen that she should deceive herself in the matter. Such likes and dislikes as she had heretofore felt could one and all have been paraphrased as a more or less agreeable state of mind, induced by the sight or thought of such and such an individual. She had never conceived the possibility that a vital affection could take its origin in aversion and fear, and grow strong through turmoil, passion, and suffering. As a matter of course, she estimated her feeling towards Bressant by the only gauge she had, and with no reference to the fact that it was a wholly inadequate one.

The majority of the impressions she had re-

ceived of him could not certainly be called pleasant; and that he was continually in her thoughts; that everything she heard or saw connected itself, in one way or another, with him; that he bore a possible part in many of her imaginations of the future:—these were facts she did not take into account, because ignorant of their significance. The conclusion that she did not like him was therefore a legitimate one, according to the light she had.

Whatever Sophie may have thought of Cornelia's answer, she said no more, but lay in reverie, opening and shutting her scissors in an objectless manner, until Cornelia's voice flowed forth again.

'Isn't it a pity he wasn't a nice, jolly, society fellow! it would have been such fun this winter! As it is, I don't suppose we shall be able to do so much even as if we were alone.'

From something papa said the other day, I think he'd like us to try and make Mr. Bressant more of a society fellow; perhaps it would wear away that coldness and hardness you speak of.'

'What? teach him the arts and pleasures of fashionable life?' exclaimed Cornelia, laughing.

'Dear me! I'd no more think of trying to teach that great big thing anything than—— anything!'

'But you can make him go to Abbie's party, if you are to be there yourself, and then, if you don't want to instruct him, you can give him to some one who isn't afraid of him, and—have Bill Reynolds all to yourself.'

Cornelia laughed and pouted, and told Sophie she was mean; but probably felt it a relief to have poor Bill's name introduced, he being so palpably *hors de combat.*

'It would be pretty good fun, after all—walking round on the arm of that great, tall, broad-shouldered creature, and telling him how to behave! I believe I *will* try it!' and she straightened herself up with a very valiant air.

'It will be your last chance, remember!' said Sophie, looking up with a deep smile in her eyes. 'I promised papa that when I was well, I'd take charge of Mr. Bressant myself!'

Sophie's life, as has been said, was pre-eminently an ideal one. Materialism disturbed and perplexed her, and she ignored it as much as possible. She was inspired and excited by the ideal she had conceived of Bressant, and of her

sphere of action with regard to him. But had the physical personality of the man been thrust upon her in the first place, she would have very likely recoiled, her finer intuitions would have been jarred, and their precision paralysed. Standing aloof, however, living and acting only in the realm of her pure maiden creeds, everything seemed clear and simple enough. Right should be done, and wrong be righted; there were no material conditions or hindrances; results were attained immediately.

But life is not what the pure-hearted girl painted it in her ideal dreams. The unconsidered obstacles rise into frowning and insurmountable barriers. Those we would make our beneficiaries often fail to appreciate their position, and turn our good into a worse evil than their own. We may theorise about the human soul, but to put our theories to the test, is to assume an awful responsibility.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAGUERREOTYPE.

BRESSANT occupied two adjoining rooms at Abbie's boarding-house; one contained his bed and the other was fitted up as his study. They were on the second floor of the house, and attainable through two turns in the lower entry, a winding flight of narrow stairs, and an uncertain, darkly erratic route above.

The study was some twelve feet by eight; the floor ornamented by a carpet which, to judge from the size of the pattern, must have been designed to grace some fifty-foot drawing-room. The furniture consisted of a deal table with a folding leaf, a chair, a stove—which, perhaps because it was so small, had been permitted to remain all summer — and a broad-seated lounge with squeaky springs, but quite roomy and comfortable, which monopolised a large portion of the room. The walls were papered with a bewildering diamond pattern,

in blue and white. Upon the outside window-sill stood a pot of geraniums, and another of heliotrope.

A good many books were stowed away in various parts of the study; piled one upon another in the corner by the stove, ranged side by side beneath the lounge, carefully disposed upon the inner window-sill, and occupying as much space as could be spared to them on the table. There were few ornaments to be seen; no landscapes or hunting scenes—no pictures of pretty women—no fancy pieces for the mantel—no wine either, nor cigars, for Bressant neither smoked nor drank. A beautifully-finished and coloured drawing of a patent derrick, in plan and side elevation, was pinned to the wall opposite the window. Above the mantel-piece hung an ingeniously contrived card almanac, by which the day of week and month could be told for a hundred years to come. Two small globes, terrestrial and astronomical, stood upon the table; on the mantel-piece was an ordinary kerosene lamp, with a conical shade of enamelled green paper, arabesqued in black, and ornamented with three transparencies, representing (when the lamp was lighted) bloody and fiery

scenes in the late war; but in the day-time appearing to be nothing more terrible than plain pieces of white tissue paper.

For two weeks Bressant had done his studying and thinking in this room. He had enormous powers of application, naturally and by acquisition, and the first fortnight had seen them exerted to their full extent. This diligence, however, was practised not so much because the course of study marked out necessitated it, as by way of voluntary self-discipline. His first evening's experience in the Parsonage garden had given the young man a serious shock; a disturbing influence had obtained possession of him, of which he could understand no more than that it appeared to have some connection with Cornelia. It interfered, at unexpected moments, with his processes of thought, it distracted his schemes of argument; it wrote itself unintelligibly upon the page he was reading. It even followed him in his rough tramps up the hills and through the woods, and sometimes shook the hand which held the pen during his compositions.

Bressant knew not how best to combat his novel difficulty. Although called into existence

by an extraneous circumstance, it seemed to have struck root in every faculty of his mind, and, what was more, into the inmost core of every faculty. He was possessed, not by seven devils, but by one devil in seven different forms. He felt that the only thing to be done, if he did not intend to make an entire surrender of himself, was to take stern and rigorous measures for deliverance. The best course that suggested itself was to study his seven-fold devil down; taking every precaution, of course, to keep out of the way of all additional contamination; and this course he adopted, and had conscientiously adhered to. It was with very pardonable satisfaction that he felt his malady gradually and surely give way before his unsparing regimen, until by the first of July he considered himself entirely whole and in working order, and beyond danger of relapse.

He sometimes wondered why the Professor persisted in inviting him to take dinner, or stay to tea, or sit on the balcony in the evening, or go on a pic-nic into the woods. Why couldn't the old gentleman divine the cause of his invariable and unhesitating refusals? Leaving other considerations out of the question, would

such things be likely to increase his knowledge of Theology, or further the lofty schemes of his ambition? He would be glad when that daughter left the house! What was it about her that had so disturbed and beclouded the heretofore untroubled stream? Were other women like her, or was she alone in her dangerous capacity? If the first, with what assurance could he look forward to the intellectual mastery of the world! If the last, what a refinement of misfortune to have been so thrown with her! What if he should give up Professor Valeyon altogether? No, no! if he could not conquer his destiny here, he could not be sure of doing it anywhere. Let him only be self-controlled and prudent—keep carefully and systematically out of the woman's way. Or perhaps—for it was not gratifying or dignified thus to live in terror of a minister's daughter—perhaps he might ultimately learn to associate and hold intercourse with her, unharmed. That would be a triumph worth striving for! Indeed, how could he feel secure until it had been won? Again, did there at present exist any such risk as he had brought himself to imagine? Was not this first ordeal, and its

effects, all that was to be apprehended? What if all his anxiety, and self-control, and prudence, had been wasting themselves upon nothing? Would it not be worth while to try the experiment? to prove whether he was still liable to this strange witchery and enchantment? even if so it should turn out, it was still well that the point should be settled once for all. Decided, then, that he should take the first opportunity to put himself to the test.

Thus did the young man argue around his instinct, ignorant that the poison was at that moment circulating in his blood, and prompting the very sophistries that his brain produced. He who is cured begets a wholesome aversion towards what has harmed him; he feels no curiosity to prove whether or no he be yet open to mischief from it. Bressant's poison was in fact an elixir, whose delicious intoxication he had experienced once, and which his whole nature secretly but urgently craved to taste again.

A result somewhat similar to this was doubtless what Professor Valeyon aimed at in his plan of developing the emotional and affectional elements of his pupil, albeit he was far from

imagining what might be the cost and risk to everything which he himself held most dear. Like many other men of otherwise liberal mind and clear insight into character, he had certain convictions and principles, derived from contemplating the facts and results of his own life, which he believed must produce upon other people's mental and moral constitutions as good an effect as upon his own. And possibly, could we divest our regimen of life of all personal flavour and conformation, it might, other things being favourable, suit our friends very tolerably well. But, until we are able to throw off the fetters of our own individuality, the measure of our garments can never accurately fit anybody else.

On the morning of the 1st of July, Bressant sat at his table with his books and papers about him. He was in an excellent humour, for he had just arrived at the conclusion that he might, and would, safely encounter his bugbear, Cornelia. If the Professor invited him to tea and to spend the evening, he was resolved to accept; and at that moment he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder, and, turning quickly round, recognised the sombre figure of the boarding-house keeper.

Although he had lived with her two weeks, he had not as yet had other than the briefest communication with her. He probably thought he had in hand many matters of more importance than the cultivation of his landlady's acquaintance; and she, whatever may have been her desire to carry out the promise she had made to the Professor, had not found it possible to be other than indirectly observant of his welfare.

'I knocked, Mr. Bressant, but I couldn't make you hear. I came to ask you to do me a little favour, sir.'

Bressant had risen to his feet, and stood leaning against the back of his chair. He nodded and smiled good-naturedly; his hand busy with his beard, and his eyes taking in with mild curiosity the plain and plainly-dressed woman before him. What favour could she expect him to do for her? He'd just as lief agree to anything that wouldn't interfere in any way with his arrangements. Of course she wouldn't ask anything more. As long as he paid his board-bill and created no disturbance, what obligations did he owe her?

'You see, sir,' proceeded Abbie, gently

rattling the bunch of keys that hung at her belt, 'we've been in the habit of giving a party here three or four times a year, for the young folks to come and dance and enjoy themselves. There will be one next Thursday, the 4th of July. Will you come down and join in?'

Bressant threw back his head with one of his brief laughs. 'Come to a dance? But I don't know how to dance! I never go into society. What should I do? Thank you for asking me!'

'I thought you might be interested to look on at one of our country hops,' said Abbie, whose eyes observed the young man's manner as he spoke with a closeness that would have embarrassed most men. 'There's a good deal to amuse yourself with besides dancing. The schoolmaster will be there, and the minister that is now, and Professor Valeyon.'

'Professor Valeyon?' repeated Bressant, leaning forward with his hand to his ear, and the vivid, questioning expression on his face, which was peculiar to himself.

The movement appeared to produce a disproportionate effect upon Abbie. Her finger tremblingly sought her under lip; a quiver, as if

from a sudden pain, passed across her forehead; there was a momentary unsteadiness in her eyes, and then they fastened, almost rigidly, upon the young man's face. So habitual was the woman's self-control, however, that these symptoms, whatever they betokened, were repressed and annulled, till none, save a particularly sharp-sighted person, would have noticed them. Bressant was thinking only of Professor Valeyon, and would scarcely have troubled himself, in any case, about the neuralgic spasms of his landlady.

'The Professor and Miss Valeyon will both come,' said Abbie, as soon as the neuralgia, if that it were, would allow her to speak. 'Excuse me, sir—may I sit down a moment?' These words were uttered hurriedly, and at the same moment the woman made a sudden step to the lounge, and dropped down upon it so abruptly that the venerable springs creaked again.

'Beg your pardon, ma'am,' said Bressant, rather awkwardly. 'Must be an infirm old person,' he added to himself. 'She looks older, even, than when she came in!'

'Well, sir,' said she, with rather a constrained

air, rising from the sofa in a way that confirmed the young man's opinion about her infirmity; 'Well, sir, shall I expect you on Thursday evening?'

'Yes, I'll come,' said he, with an elastic inclination of his shoulders, and a smile. He thought himself fortunate in so good an opportunity to put his invulnerability to the proof.

Abbie bowed without speaking, and moved towards the door. Having opened it, she turned round with her hands upon the latch: 'Professor Valeyon tells me you're an orphan, sir?'

'My father died last month; I never knew my mother,' returned Bressant, pushing his brown beard between his teeth, and biting it impatiently. He wished people would get through asking him about his deceased relatives.

'Never knew your mother! it must have been—have you never felt the need of her?'

'Oh, no! I was better without one,' said he, quite provoked at his landlady's pertinacity. He turned about, and threw himself into his chair. The woman shrank back beyond the threshold.

'Good day, sir, and thank you,' she said. But Bressant could not be expected to hear the low, timid tone in which she spoke. Seeing that he made no response, she softly closed the door.

She went along the dark entry to her own room. On a little table in one corner stood an old-fashioned desk. She opened it, and, unlocking an inner drawer, took therefrom a small morocco case, lined with red velvet and containing a daguerreotype much faded by age. She studied it long and earnestly, but seemingly without any very satisfactory result.

But how can I expect it?' murmured she. 'So long ago as this was taken! so sickly and unformed as he was then! But oh! did they think I could be blind to that face, and form, and expression! and there is none other but he, now; the father is dead. Dead! Well, may God forgive him all the evil of his life; I'm sure I do. But what will this turn out to be, I wonder—a curse or a blessing? I must wait —it isn't for me to speak; I must wait, and the end may be happy, after all.'

CHAPTER X.

ONLY FOR TO-NIGHT!

On the evening of the 4th of July, Professor Valeyon and Cornelia got into the waggon and drove off behind Dolly to the boarding-house. It was a warm, breathless night, and the stars looked brighter and more numerous than usual.

The boarding-house was one of the largest buildings in town; an accidental sort of structure, painted white, green-blinded, and protected from the two roads at whose intersection it stood, by a white-washed board fence, deficient in several places. The house expanded into no less than four large bay-windows, affording an outlook to three small rooms upon the ground floor. The four or five other larger apartments were forced to pass a gloomy existence behind a loop-hole or two apiece, which could not have measured over three feet in any direction.

The two largest rooms lay corner to corner, at right angles to one another, and communi-

cating by a passage-way through their point of contact. Who the original genius was who discovered the admirable facilities this else preposterous arrangement afforded for dances, will remain for ever unknown; but the experiment once tried became an institution as permanent as Abbie herself.

The small triangle of space between the two rooms, which to utilize had theretofore been an unsolved problem, served admirably as a station for the band; they could be heard in either apartment equally well. The small boudoirs, nooks, and corners which were scattered here and there with lavish hand, did excellent duty as flirtation boxes for those of the dancers who needed that refreshment; the only drawback being that one was never quite sure of privacy, on account of the complicated system of doors and entries that prevailed.

But in spite of all objections, a dance at Abbie's was the rallying cry of the community. All the respectable people in town put on their newest clothes—and if they were new it did not so much matter what the style might be—and thronged, on foot or in waggon, to the boarding-house door. They came to have a good time,

and they always succeeded in their object. What pigeon-wings were performed! what polkas perpetrated! what waltzes wreaked! How the long lines of the Virginia Reel, or All the Way to Boston, extended through the hall from end to end, and how the couples twisted, whirled, and scooted between them! How the call-man, with his violin under his chin, stopped playing to vociferate his orders, or anathematize some bewildered pair! How the old folks, sitting on chairs and benches along the walls, nodded and smiled and mumbled to one another as the ruddy faces of their descendants passed and repassed before them, and spoke to one another of like scenes thirty, or forty, or fifty years ago! How happy everybody was, and what a jolly noise they made!

As Cornelia and her papa approached the house, every window was alight, above and below. The door was thrown hospitably open, and the lamplight streamed forth and ran down the steps, and lay in a long rectangular pool upon the road. Abbie stood near the entrance, directing the ladies one way and the gentlemen another. Punctuality at an affair of this kind being among the village virtues, the whole com-

pany was present within a surprisingly short time of the appointed hour.

'Good evening, Professor Valeyon; good evening, my dear; how well you look! Step upstairs—the first room on the right.'

'My pupil is to be here to-night, isn't he?' enquired the Professor, as his daughter vanished.

'Yes, he said he'd be down. He doesn't seem to be used to society. Miss Cornelia told me she thought it would do him good to begin, so I went up the other day and asked him.'

'Oh! Humph!' said the old gentleman, who had vainly endeavoured to catch Abbie's eye while she was speaking. He stood silent a few moments, and then moved off to the gentlemen's dressing-room, taking a pair of white kid gloves from his pocket as he went.

Cornelia, having removed her hood, put on her slippers, shaken out her skirt, touched her hair with the tips of her gloved fingers, and settled the ribbon at her throat, descended to the reception room, as that part of the entrance hall where Abbie stood was styled, and found her papa awaiting her. She was about to take his arm, when the hostess touched her on the shoulder.

'Wait a moment,' said she, with a peculiar grave smile; 'I'll bring you your *protégé*.'

Bressant was standing in the doorway of an inner room, leaning with the elbow of one arm in the hand of the other, as he pulled at his moustache and twisted the beard on his chin. He looked ill at ease, and as if he rather regretted his intrepidity in coming down. Had he been what is called a student of human nature, he might have been interested in the quaint people and customs which an occasion like this would bring to light. But he believed that all the traits and elements of mankind at large were comprised, in a superior form, within himself, and that, knowing himself, he would virtually know the world. This somewhat exclusive creed had doubtless been aided and abetted by his deafness, which, even had he been otherwise inclined by nature, must have thrown him back, in great measure, upon himself; or, possibly, the dogma may have been but an outgrowth of the physical defect; he fights hard and well, in this world, who counteracts the bias given by bodily infirmity. In any case, however, since such was the position of his mind, he could scarcely be expected to derive

much entertainment from a social occasion like the present. It is even uncertain whether he would not actually have repented and taken to flight, had not Abbie come up at the critical moment, and carried him off to Cornelia.

'I wanted to have the pleasure of presenting Mr. Bressant to you myself,' said she, with the same peculiar smile; and so left them together.

The young man stood confronting the young woman, who, besides being dressed with great taste, looked, owing to the whimsical circumstances in which she was placed, every bit of beauty she had. Bressant stared at her in astonishment.

One woman's beauty cannot be contrasted with another's; as well compare a summer valley with the white clouds sailing over it; each is to be enjoyed in its own way. But Cornelia's loveliness carried with it a peculiar quality, which not only gratified the eye, but went further, and seemed to touch a vital chord in the beholder, jarring throughout his being with a sweet distribution of effect, and causing heart and voice to vibrate. It made Bressant conscious in every fibre that he was man and she woman. Whence came the influence he could not tell, and mean-

while it gained ever stronger and deeper hold upon him. Was it from the eyes, a-sparkle with the essence of youth and health? or from the mouth, with its red warmth of full yet delicate curves? the gates of what sweetness of breath! or from the crisp, dark, lustreless luxuriance of the hair? or from the curved shadows melting on the cheeks, and nestling beneath the chin? He could trace it to no single one of these various elements—yet how lovely all were! Whence, then, was it? In a bottle of wine there are many drops, alike in colour, shape, flavour, and sparkle; in which one, of all, lurks the intoxication? The only way to make sure of the drop is to drink the bottle; and even then, though there will be no doubt about the intoxication, its precise origin may still be disputed.

As Bressant bowed to Cornelia, who courtesied grandly in return, the band struck up a waltz, which seemed to be at once reflected in her face and manner. She was particularly sensitive to musical impressions, and instinctively looked up to Bressant's face for sympathy, forgetting at the moment that his infirmity would probably debar him from sharing her enjoyment. However that might be, he was certainly not

indifferent to the silent music of her beauty; he was gazing down upon her with an intensity which caused her to droop her eyes, and draw an uneven breath or two. There was in him all a man's fire, strangely mingled with the freshness of a boy.

'Take my arm,' said he, offering it to her. After an instant's hesitation, more mental, however, than physical, she laid her graceful hand within it, and they moved towards the dancing-room.

But at the instant of contact an electric pulsation seemed to pass through Cornelia's blood, imbuing it with a powerful ichor, alien to herself, yet whose potency was delicious to her. She fancied, also, that she herself went out in the same way to her companion, establishing a magnetic interchange of personalities, so that each felt and shared the other's thoughts and emotions.

They now stood in the principal dancing-hall, where several couples, who had already taken the floor, were revolving with various degrees of awkwardness. The music had flowed into Cornelia's ears until she was full of the rhythmical harmony. She glanced up

once more at her partner, this time with a lustrous look of confidence. Was it possible that he had become inspired through her? Certainly it seemed as if the feeling of the tune were discernible in his face as well as hers; it was even betokened by the lightsome pose of his figure, and a scarcely subdued buoyancy in his step. Moment by moment did the occult sympathy between one another and the cadence of the music grow more assured and complete; and at length—though precisely how it came about neither Cornelia nor Bressant could have told—they were conscious of floating through the room, mutually supporting and leading on each other, mind and motion pulsating with the beat of the tune, amidst a bright, half-seen chaos of lights, faces, and forms, dancing a waltz!

Neither felt any surprise at what, but a few moments before, both would have deemed an impossibility. The easy, whirling sweep of the motion, not ending nor beginning, seemed, to Bressant as well as to Cornelia, the most natural thing in the world. Beautifully as she danced, he was no whit her inferior. They moved in complete accord. Years of practice could not have made the harmony more perfect.

The charm of dancing, although nothing is easier than to experience it, is something that eludes statement. It is the language of the body, graceful and significant. It has that in it which will make it live and be loved so long as men and women exist as such. The fascination of the motion, the magic of the music, the hour, the lights; the nearness, the touch of hands, the leaning, the support, the starting off in fresh bewilderments; the trilling down the gamut of the hall; the pauses and recommencements; even the little incidents of collision and escape; the trips, slips, and quick recoveries; the breathless words whispered in the ear, and the laughter; the dropped handkerchief, the crushed fan, the faithless hairpin—these, and a thousand more such small elements make dancing imperishable.

Presently—and it might have been after a minute or an hour, for all they could have told—Bressant and Cornelia awoke to a sense of four bare walls, papered with a pattern of abominable regularity, a floor of rough and unwaxed boards, a panting crowd of country girls and bumpkins. The music had ceased, and nothing remained in its place save a fiddle, a harp, and an inferior piano.

'Come out to the door!' said Bressant, 'the air here is not fit for us to breathe.'

They went, Cornelia leaning on his arm, silent; their minds inactive, conscious only of a pleasant, dreamy feeling of magnetic communion. Both felt impelled to keep together—to be in contact; the mere thought of separation would have made them shudder.

The door stood open, and they emerged through it on to the wooden steps. At first their eyes, dazzled by the noisy glare of the house, could distinguish nothing in the silent darkness without. But by-and-bye a singular gentle radiance began to diffuse itself through the soft night air, as if a new moon had all at once arisen. They looked first at each other, and then upwards at the sky. Cornelia pressed her companion's arm, and caught her breath.

From the north had uprisen a column of light, of about the apparent breadth of the Milky Way, but far more brilliant, and defined clearly at the edges. Higher and higher it rose, until it reached the zenith. Pausing a moment there, it then began to slide and lengthen down the southern slope of the sky, lower and lower, till its extreme limit seemed to mingle with the

haze on the horizon. Having thus completed its stupendous sweep, it remained, brightening and paling by turns, for several minutes. Finally, it slowly and imperceptibly faded away, vanishing first at the loftiest point of all, and lingering downwards on either side, till all was gone.

'What a glorious arch!' exclaimed Cornelia.

'It was put there for us, was it not?' rejoined Bressant.

Some of the other guests had come out in time to see the latter part of this spectacle, as it trembled athwart the heavens. They 'Oh'd' and 'Ah'd' in vast astonishment and admiration; and one of them humorously asserted that it had been engaged, at a huge expense, to celebrate the anniversary of American Independence. So the celestial arch vanished in the echo of a horse-laugh. But Bressant and Cornelia, as they stood silently arm-in-arm, felt as if it were rather the presage of an emancipation of their own selves. From, or to what, they did not ask; nor did the old superstition, that such signs foretell ruin and disaster, recur to their minds until long afterwards.

Dancing was now recommenced, but, by an unuttered agreement, the two refrained from

participating again. The enjoyment had been too entire to risk a repetition. They sat down in one of the small boudoirs, which, through a demoralised corridor, commanded a view of the extremity of one of the dancing rooms.

From this vantage-ground they could see the distinctive features of the assembly pass before their eyes. Girls who danced well striving to look graceful in the arms of men who danced ill, or floundering women bringing disgrace and misery upon embracing men. Dancers of the old school, whose forte lay in quadrilles and contra-dances, cutting strange capers, with faces of earnest gravity. People smiling whenever spoken to, and without hearing what was said; and on-lookers smiling by a sort of photographic process at fun in which they had no concern. Introductions, where the lady was self-possessed and bewitching, the gentleman monosyllabic and poker-like: others, where he was off-hand, ogling, and facetious; she timid, credulous, and blushing. All kinds of costumes, from the solitary dress-coat, and low-necked ball-dress, worn respectively by Mr. and Mrs. Van Brueck from Albany, to the mixed tweed sack and

trousers, and the check gingham, adorning the Browne boy and girl.

'How foolish it all seems when you're not doing it yourself!' remarked Cornelia at last, laughing softly.

'But very wise when you are.'

'How beautifully you danced! I didn't know you could.'

'I never did before—I couldn't, with anyone but you. As soon as we touched each other, I felt everything through you.'

'It was very strange, wasn't it? and yet I don't wonder at it, somehow!'

'It would have been stranger not to have been so.'

'Why, how have you been hearing what I said?' suddenly exclaimed Cornelia, looking at him in surprise; 'I've been almost whispering all this time!'

'Have you? It sounded loud enough to me. But I could hear you think to-night, I believe. Will it be so to-morrow, do you suppose?'

'To-morrow!' repeated Cornelia. 'Dear me! to-morrow is my last day here.'

'The last day!' echoed Bressant, in a tone

of dismay. 'Shall we find one another the same as to-night when you come back?'

'Why not?' responded she, with a resumption of cheerfulness. 'I shan't be gone but three months.'

So the conversation lingered along, until gradually the greater part of it was supported by Bressant, while Cornelia sat quiet and listened—a thing she had never done before. But the young man's way of expressing himself was picturesque and piquant, keeping the attention thoroughly awake. His ideas and topics were original. He plunged into the midst of a subject, and talked backwards and forwards at the same time, yet conveyed a marvellously clear idea of his meaning. Sometimes the last word was the key-note that rendered the whole intelligible. And he had the bearing of a man all unaccustomed to deal with women—ignorant of the traditional arts of entertainment which society practises upon itself. He talked to Cornelia as he might have done to a man, and yet his manner showed a subtle difference—a lack of assurance—a treading in a pleasant garden with fear of trespassing—the recognition of the woman. To Cornelia it had the effect

of the most soothing and delicious flattery; had he been as worldly-wise as other men, he could not have been so delicate.

He, for his part, gave himself wholly up to be fascinated and absorbed by the lovely woman at his side. Did a thought of danger intrude, the whisper, 'only for to-night, only for to-night!' sufficed to banish it. Yet another day, and he would return to the old life once more.

CHAPTER XI.

EVERY LITTLE COUNTS.

Mr. William Reynolds arrived late, perhaps because he delayed too long over the niceties of his toilet. He was a country young man, fashioned upon a well-worn last. His occupation for several years past had been to attend to the furnishing and driving of a milk cart, and very likely it was this which had hindered the proper development of his figure. At all events, he was stoutest where it is generally thought advisable to be lean, and narrow where popular prejudice demands breadth. His knees were more conspicuous than his legs, and his elbows than his arms. His face was striking, chiefly because an accident in early life had prostrated his nose; the expression, though lacking force, was in the main good-natured; the eyes were modestly veiled behind a pair of eye-glasses, which stayed on, as it were, by accident.

Mr. Reynolds was an admirer of Cornelia's;

a fact which was the occasion of much pleasant remark and easy witticism. More serious consequences were not likely to ensue, for such men as he seldom attain to be other than indirectly useful or mildly obnoxious to their fellow-creatures. But the strongest instincts he had were social; and it was touching to observe the earnestness with which they urged him to lumber the path of fashion and gay life. He nearly broke his own heart, and unseated his instructor's reason, in his efforts to learn dancing; and to secure elegant apparel for Sundays and parties, he would forswear the butcher's waggon for months at a time. Once in a while he would smoke a Havanna cigar from the assortment to be found at the grocery store on the corner, and sometimes, when a national holiday, or the gloom of unrequited love rendered strong measures a necessity, he would become recklessly convivial over muddy whisky and water, amidst the spittoons and coloured prints of the hotel bar-room.

On the present evening he arrived late, and came upon Cornelia and Bressant just as the latter was proposing to obtain the Professor's consent to accompanying her home on foot.

Mr. Reynolds advanced, smiling; a polka was being played at the moment, and he playfully contorted his figure and balanced his head from side to side in time with the tune, while with his right forefinger he beckoned winningly to Miss Valeyon to join him in the dance. Bressant gave an involuntary shudder of disgust; it seemed to him a grisly caricature of the inspiration he himself had felt at the beginning of the evening. But Cornelia was equal to the emergency.

'If you'll go and ask papa now,' said she, 'I'll take care of this person meantime. He's known me so long. I don't want to be unpolite to him.'

A good deal of harm may be done in this world by what is called a reluctance to be uncivil. There is generally more selfishness than consideration about it. All sincere admiration, no matter from how low a source, is grateful to us. Cornelia knew that Bill Reynolds worshipped her with his whole small capacity, and she was unwilling to deny herself the miserable little incense, and give him plainly to understand that, though it was not distasteful to her, he

was. And who could blame her for not wanting to hurt his feelings?

Bressant had no such delicate scruples, and would gladly have assisted poor Bill through the open bow-window. He departed on his errand, however, with nothing more than a look of intense dissatisfaction, which was entirely lost upon the infatuated Reynolds.

'How lovely you do look to-night, Miss Valkyon! I almost think sometimes it ain't fair anybody should look as lovely as you do. Elegant music they've got to-night, ain't it? Come now—just one turn. What?'

Cornelia actually had danced with this young gentleman on one or two memorable occasions in the past, but was scarcely in the mood to do so this evening. As she looked at him, now, she wondered how she ever had. What a difference there is in men! and even more in the way we regard them at different times. Bressant, simply by being himself, had annihilated all such small claims to social life as Bill Reynolds ever possessed.

'I'm not dancing to-night, thank you,' said Cornelia; but she smiled so as well-nigh to heal

the wound her words inflicted. 'What makes you so late?'

Now, the fact was that Mr. Reynolds had been weak enough to allow himself to be drawn into conversation with some friends near the entrance of the hotel possessing the bar-room with the spittoons and coloured prints already alluded to; and being the 4th of July, which, like many other days, comes but once a year; and a 'dry night,' as his friends assured him, he had further given evidence of lack of stamina by accepting an invitation to 'take a damp.' When he had finally succeeded in making his escape, he was conscious that it was in a tolerably damp condition; and it had occurred to him, as a brilliant idea, to put his head beneath the pump by way of freshening up his wits. The effect had been, for the moment, undoubtedly clarifying, and he made his entrance into Abbie's with a great deal of confidence; more, perhaps, than was entirely warrantable; for the muddy whisky was still circulating in his blood, and the light, the close, hot air, and the excitement within doors, was rapidly undoing the good work which the pump had accomplished. It was probably a dim suspicion that

such was the case, which made him hesitate, and stick his hands in his pockets, and screw his boot heel into the floor, when Cornelia asked him why he was so late.

But the question had been asked in pure idleness, and not with any interest or purpose to elicit a reply. The next minute she relieved him from his embarrassment by speaking again.

'Would you mind doing me a favour, Bill?'

It seemed to Bill, that for the sake of hearing his Christian name from her lips, he would be willing to forswear all else that made life most dear,—Havanna cigars and muddy whisky included; and he was proceeding with impressive gravity to make a statement to that effect, when Cornelia once more interrupted him.

'Thank you; I was sure you would. You're always so kind! You see I'm obliged to go home now, but papa will want to stay to supper, probably, or to play backgammon, and of course I shall leave him the waggon. Now, I want you to promise to see that Dolly is properly harnessed before he starts—will you? You know that man they have here isn't always quite sober, especially when it's 4th of July, or anything of that sort; and papa is getting old.'

'Yes, Miss Val'yon. I'll attend to it. I'll fix the old gentleman up, like he was my own father. And you're just right about that fellow that's around here; *I* wouldn't trust him. Why —' Bill was on the point of mentioning that he had made one of the convivial party that evening, but checked himself in time, and looked particularly profound.

Cornelia had probably had more than one motive in making her request of Bill Reynolds. She wanted to avoid being urged to dance, by keeping his mind otherwise employed; she enjoyed the amusement of making him imagine that he was of some consequence and importance to her; and lastly, she was very willing that all this should concur with some possible benefit to her father. Of Bill's irresponsible condition she had of course no suspicion; indeed he might have been far worse, with impunity, as far as she was concerned. It takes considerable practice to detect the effects of liquor, except when very excessive; and Cornelia had no such training.

'And,' added she, as she saw Bressant making his way towards her, with unmistakable signs on his face of having been successful in his

errand, 'and suppose you go now, and find out when papa leaves, so as to be sure to be on hand.'

It was very neatly managed, on the whole; and Cornelia, as she put on her shoes, and drew the hood around her face, congratulated herself on her tact and readiness. Yet she felt a little uneasiness, assignable to no particular cause, and upon no definite subject; it may have been nothing more than some slight qualms of conscience at having so deluded her unfortunate admirer. As she came down from the ladies' dressing-room, she felt a strong impulse to go and kiss her papa good-bye; but reflecting that Bill would probably be with him, and that she would see him at any rate before she went to bed, she thought better of it; and taking Bressant's arm—he was awaiting her at the foot of the stairs—she signified her readiness to start.

'When did papa say he was coming?' asked she, as they moved through the passage-way to the door.

'He was playing backgammon; he said he should be through in ten minutes; he would probably overtake us before we got to the parsonage,' replied the young man.

'I hope he'll be all safe!' said Cornelia, half to herself, the vague feeling of uneasiness still working within her.

At the door they were met by Abbie, who bade them good night with the same expression upon her lips and in her eyes that she had worn when presenting them to one another early in the evening.

'Take good care of each other, my children,' said she, as they passed out; but her tone was so low as to be audible to Cornelia alone.

CHAPTER XII.

DOLLY ACTS AN IMPORTANT PART.

THE faintest of breezes wafted in the young people's faces as they descended the wooden steps of the boarding-house and passed along the dark, deserted sidewalk of the village street. The noisy dance was soon left at a distance; how extravagant and unnatural it seemed in comparison with the deep, sweet night in which they were losing themselves!

The brightness of the stars, and the wavering peaks and jagged edges of the northern lights, brought out the shadows of the uneven hills, and revealed the winding length of downy mist which kept the stream in the valley warm. Such was the stillness, and the subdued tone of the landscape, that it seemed unreal—the phantom of a world which had lost its sunshine, and was mourning for it in gentle melancholy.

The sense of the solitude around them brought the young man and woman closer to one another.

For enjoyment to be, mortally speaking, perfect, it needs that a soft and dreamy element of sadness should be added to it; and this was given by the gracious influence of the night. The darkness, too, encouraged the germs of that mutual reliance, hopefulness, and trust which combine to build up the more vital and profound relations of life. There is a magic mystery and power in it, which we can laugh at in the sunshine, but whose reality, at times, forces itself upon us mightily.

As Bressant trod onwards, with the warm and lovely woman living and moving at his side, and clinging to his arm with a dainty pressure, just perceptible enough to make him wish it were a little closer—it entered his mind to marvel at the tender change that seemed to have come over familiar things.

'I've walked often in the night, before,' observed he, looking around him, and then at Cornelia; 'on the same road, too; but it never made me feel as now. It is beautiful.' He used the word with a doubtful intonation, as if unaccustomed to it, and not quite sure whether he were applying it correctly.

'You speak as if you didn't know what you

were talking about!' said Cornelia, with a round, melodious laugh. 'Did you never see or care for anything beautiful before this evening?'

'You remember that night in the garden?' asked Bressant, abruptly. 'I've learnt a great deal since then. I couldn't understand it at the moment; I wasn't prepared for it—understand? but I know now—it was beauty—I saw it and felt it—and it drove me out of myself.'

Cornelia was thrilled, half with fear and half with delight. Bressant spoke with an almost fierce sincerity and earnestness of conviction, that quite overbore the shield of playful incredulity which woman instinctively raises on such occasions; they seemed to have crossed, at one step, the pale of conventionalities; and, sweet and alluring as the outer wilderness may be, it is wilderness still, and full of sudden precipices. Besides, the very energy and impetuosity which the young man showed, suggested the apprehension that the power of his newly-awakened emotions was greater than his ability to control and manage them.

But beauty, as he understood it, was something of deeper and wider significance than that

generally accepted. It was all, in mankind and nature, that appeals to and gratifies the senses and sensuous emotions. Cornelia had been the door through which he had passed into a consciousness of its existence; the fragrant pass leading to the mighty valley. Unfortunately, neither he nor she were in a position to comprehend this fact: she was no metaphysical casuist, and never imagined but that he would find the end, as well as the beginning of his newly-opened world in her: and he, dizzied by the tumult and novelty of the vision, was naturally disposed to attribute most value and importance to the only element in it of which he had as yet taken any real and definite cognisance.

'What a strange, one-sided life you must have had!' Cornelia remarked, after they had walked a little way in silence. 'Don't you think you'll be happier for having found the other side out?'

Bressant started, and did not immediately reply. Thus far he had looked upon this unexpected enlargement of feeling as merely a temporary episode, after all; not anything permanently to affect the predetermined course

and conduct of his life. The idea that it was to round out and perfect his existence—that he was to find his highest happiness in it—had never for a moment occurred to him. He did not believe it possible that it could co-exist with lofty aims and strenuous effort; it was a weakness—a delicious one—but still a weakness, and ultimately to be trampled under foot.

But Cornelia had taken the ground that it was the half of life—not only that, but the better and more desirable half. For the first time it dawned upon the young man, that he might be obliged to decide between following out the high and ascetic ambition which had guided his life thus far, and abandoning, or at least lowering it, to take in that other part of which Cornelia was the incarnation. The prospect drove the blood to his heart and left him pale. He would not entertain it yet. Had he not promised himself to let this one night go by?

'It would be a very sweet happiness, if I were sure of finding it,' said he; and Cornelia, turning this answer over in her foolish heart, made a great deal out of it, and was thankful for the darkness that veiled her face. But Bressant was hardly far advanced enough in the

art of affection to make a graceful use of double meanings; and most likely Cornelia might have spared herself the blush.

Nevertheless, the young man was more deeply involved than he suspected. That magnetic sympathy could not otherwise have existed between him and his companion. The music could not have sounded through her sense to his, nor her whisper have penetrated the barrier of his infirmity, unless something akin to love had been the interpreter and guide; and not a one-sided something, either.

On they walked, with the feeling of intimacy and mutual contentment growing stronger at every moment. The ground was full of ruts and inequalities, and ever and anon a mis-step or an overbalance would cause them involuntarily to tighten their hold upon each other; involuntarily, but with a secret sensation of pleasure that made them hope there were more rough places further on. They did their best to keep up a desultory conversation, perhaps, because they wished to spare each other the embarrassment which silence would have caused, in leaving the pleasant condition of affairs without a veil. When this kind of thing first be-

gins to be realised between young people, the enjoyment takes on a more delicate flavour from a pretended ignoring of it.

It is beautiful to imagine them thus placed in a situation to which both were strangers, knowing not what new delight the next moment might bring forth. There was an element of childlikeness and innocence about it, the more pleasing to behold in proportion as they were elevated in mind or organization above the average of mankind.

A woman who loves thinks first of the man who has her heart; while he, as a general rule, is primarily concerned with himself. If Bressant wished Cornelia to be happy and loving, it was in order that he himself might thereby be incited to greater love and happiness; but had her pleasure been independent of his own, he would not have troubled himself about it. To her, on the other hand, Bressant's well-being would have been paramount to her own, and to be preserved, if need were, at its sacrifice.

Even a perception, on her part, of this selfishness in him, would not have alienated her. Selfishness in him she loves does not chill, but augments, a woman's affection. Cornelia,

already inclined to allow her companion everything, would have seen nothing unbecoming in his being of the same mind himself. He could scarcely value himself so high as she.

Meanwhile Professor Valeyon, having won his game of backgammon, hunted up his hat, made his adieux, and went to the shed for his waggon. He perceived a figure apparently busy in buckling Dolly between the shafts, and supposing it to be the ostler, called to him to know whether everything was ready.

'All serene, Profess'r Val'yon,' responded the voice of Mr. Reynolds, as he led Dolly—who seemed rather restive—out into the yard. 'Here you are, all fixed! I done it for you, in style. Jump in, and I'll give you the reins.'

'Is this the reason you were asking me what time I should start, Bill?' enquired the old gentleman, as he mounted to his seat. 'Very kind of you: sure she's all right?'

'Well, I ought to know something about harnessing a mare by this time, I guess!' responded Bill, with a good deal of dignity, as he handed up the reins.

'Well, well! no doubt—no doubt! I'm

accustomed to oversee it myself, that's all. Steady, Dolly! Good night.'

'Good night, Profess'r Val'yon,' said Bill, who, in harnessing the mare had managed, with intoxicated ingenuity, so to twist one of the buckles of the head-gear, that every time the reins were tightened, the sharp tongue was driven in under her jaw-bone. The waggon rattled off at an unusual speed; there was no need for a whip, and the Professor congratulated himself upon the fine condition of his steed.

'Hasn't shown such speed for years,' muttered he, admiringly. 'If I'd only been a horse-jockey, now, I could have made a fortune out of her! Points all superb—only wants a little training.'

They had now descended the hill on which stood the village, and were flying along the level stretch between the willow trees. The wheels crunched swiftly and smoothly along the ruts, or, striking sharply against a stone, made the old waggon bounce and creak. Dolly was putting her best foot foremost, and her ears were laid back close to her head: though that, by reason of the darkness, Professor Valeyon

could not see. He and Dolly had travelled this road in company so often, however, and every turn and dip was so well known to him, that it never would have occurred to him to feel any anxiety. Beyond keeping a firm hold of the reins, he let the mare have her own way.

In a few minutes the willow stretch was passed, and they began to stretch with vigorous swing up the slope. Dolly's haunches were visible, working below in the darkness, and occasionally a spark of fire was struck from the rock by her hoof. Really she was doing well to-night. As they topped the brow of the slope, the Professor tightened the reins a little. It wouldn't do to let the old mare overwork herself. But instead of slackening her pace, she sprang forwards more swiftly than ever.

'That's odd!' murmured the old gentleman. 'Can anything be the matter, I wonder?' and he gave another steady pull on the reins. The waggon was jerked forward with such a wrench as almost to throw him backwards. There was no doubt that something was the matter, now.

By this time they were within a quarter of a mile of the Parsonage, and rapidly approaching

the sharp bend around the rocky spur of the hill. Dolly's skimming hind legs spurned the road faster and faster, and the fences flickered by in a terrible hurry. They whisked around the curve with a sharp, grating sound of the wheels on the rock, and the Parsonage lay but a short distance ahead. Suddenly a white object seemed to rise out of the road not more than a hundred yards in advance. Dolly, with the bit caught vigorously between her teeth, stretched her neck and head out and ran. Professor Valeyon, bracing himself with his feet against the dash-board, leaned back with his whole weight and sawed the reins right and left. When within a few yards of the white object—which seemed to have fluttered back to one side of the road—his right rein broke: he lost his balance and fell over backwards into the bottom of the waggon, while Dolly, quite unrestrained, dashed on madly.

The Professor had just made up his mind that he stood very little chance of seeing Abbie, or his daughters again, when he felt the onward rush suddenly modified. There was a pawing and snorting, an irregular jerk or two, and then a dead stop. The old gentleman picked himself

up and descended to the ground uninjured beyond a few slight bruises.

Cornelia and Bressant had been pacing the latter part of their way slowly, there being a disinclination on both their parts to come to the end of it. But they had passed the bend, and were within a few rods of the Parsonage, before Cornelia pressed her companion's arm, paused, listened, and said,

'I think I hear him coming: yes! that's Dolly—but how fast she's going!'

As they stood, arm in arm, Bressant was between Cornelia and the approaching vehicle: but when it swung around the corner, she stepped forwards, thus bringing her white dress suddenly into view. At the same moment the velocity of the waggon was much increased, and as it came upon them, both saw the figure on the seat, easily recognisable as the Professor, fall over backwards. Bressant, who had been busy freeing the guard of his watch, handed it to Cornelia, at the same time pressing her back to one side. He then stepped forward in silence, half facing up the road.

Cornelia remained motionless, her hands drawn up beneath her chin: and while she

drew a single trembling breath, and the busy watch ticked away five seconds, the whole act passed before her eyes. She saw Bressant standing, lightly erect, near the centre of the road, could discern his darkly clad, well-knit figure, seemingly gigantic in the gloom: his head turned towards the on rushing mare, one foot a little advanced, his arms partly raised, and bent: remarked what a marvellous mingling of grace and power was in his form and bearing: as the watch ticked again, she saw him spring forwards and upwards, grasping and dragging down both reins in his hands: another tick—he was dashed against Dolly's shoulder, and his body swung around along the shaft, but without loosening his hold upon the reins: tick, tick, tick, the mare's headway was slackened; the dragging at the bit of that great weight was more than she could carry; tick, tick, tick, she staggered on a few paces, trailing Bressant along the road; tick, tick, she came to a panting, trembling standstill; Bressant let go the reins, but, instead of rising to his feet, he dropped loosely to the earth, and lay there; tick—the five seconds were up, and Cornelia drew her second breath.

By the time the Professor had scrambled out of the waggon and got around to the scene of action, he found the mysterious white figure—his own daughter—kneeling in the road beside a prostrate something he knew must be Bressant.

'Father, is he dead?' she asked, in a broken, horror-stricken voice.

The old gentleman was too much concerned to reply. Had he been a narrower nature he might have been aggrieved at Cornelia's ignoring his own late deadly peril in her anxiety for the young man. But he would have done her wrong; her heart had stood still for him till she had seen his safety assured; then it had gone out in gratitude, admiration, and tender solicitude for the man who had shown unfaltering and desperate determination in saving him.

Having backed Dolly—who was standing, quite subdued, with hanging head and heaving sides—away from the body, Professor Valeyon stooped down to make an examination. He had begun life as a surgeon, and was well skilled in the science. He cautiously unbuttoned the closely-fitting coat.

'Stop! let me alone! let me alone!—will you?' growled Bressant, speaking thickly and disjointedly like one just recovering from a fainting fit; but with unmistakable signs of ill-temper.

'Thank God! you're alive, my boy,' said the Professor, too much relieved to notice the tone. 'Cornelia, my dear, run to the house and get Michael and the wheelbarrow. Any bones broken do you think?' he continued, carefully pursuing his investigations the while.

'No, nothing! can't you let me lie here alone?' was the sulky reply. But as the other's hand happened to press lightly in the vicinity of the chest, Bressant drew a quick, gasping breath, and could not control a spasm of pain.

'Don't touch there—it's where the shaft struck me,' said he, in a voice that was no more than a whisper, but as sullen as if he had been the victim of some unpardonable wrong. There was a trace of mortification in it, too, such as might have been caused by detection in a disgraceful act.

'Never saw anything like this in him, before,' said the Professor to himself. 'Badly injured,

too, I'm afraid: collar-bone broken, at any rate. Ah! there's the wheelbarrow, and Neelie with some cushions. Now, Michael, take hold of him carefully, and help me lift him in.'

But Bressant, as he felt the first touch, opened wide his half-closed eyes, and looked around savagely.

'Keep your hands off me,' whispered he, in a menacing tone: 'if I must go into the house, I'll walk in myself.'

'Nonsense! you're crazy! "walk in?"' cried the Professor.

Bressant said no more, but, with an effort that forced a groan, he rolled over on his face, and thence raised himself to a kneeling posture. He paused so a moment, and then, by another spasmodic movement, succeeded in gaining his feet. He had been twice kicked in his right leg, and the pain was well-nigh insupportable. He stood balancing himself unsteadily.

'Let me help you,' said Cornelia, coming to his side. But he took no notice of her, not even turning his eyes upon her. He staggered blindly along the road to the gate; it gave way before him with a reluctant rattle, and closed with an ill-tempered clap as he passed through.

Swaying from side to side of the marble walk, he at last reached the porch. In trying to ascend the steps, he stumbled, and pitched forward in a heavy fall.

'There! — confound his obstinacy! he's fainted,' muttered the Professor, with an awful frown, while the tears ran down his cheeks. 'Here, Michael, help me carry him in before he comes to.'

CHAPTER XIII.

A KEEPSAKE.

BRESSANT'S collar-bone was broken; there were two severe bruises on his leg, though it had escaped fracture; his body in several places was marked with dark contusions, and there was a cut in the back of his head, where he had fallen against a stone. The Professor set the collar-bone—a harrowing piece of work, there being no anæsthetics at hand—and attended to the other hurts; the patient all the while preserving a dogged and moody silence, and avoiding the eyes of whoever looked at him.

'Can't understand it,' said the old gentleman to himself; 'the fellow acts like a wild beast as regards his appreciation of human sympathy, in spite of his refined intellect and cultivation. A wounded animal has the same instinct to crawl away and suffer in private.'

When brought into the house, Bressant had been laid in the spare room adjoining the Pro-

fessor's study. After he had done all he could for his comfort, the warm-hearted old gentleman, being overcome with fatigue, retired to rest; the patient lay sullenly quiet, wishing it were day, and again wishing day would never come: at length the composing draught which had been given him took effect, and he sank heavily into sleep.

It was broad daylight when he awoke and stared feverishly around him. The room was a pleasant one, facing the north and east, and the morning sun came cheerfully in through the open windows, slanting down the walls, and brightening on the carpet. It was a great improvement upon his rather gloomy room at the boarding-house, and he could not but feel it so. A small ormolu clock ticked rapidly upon the mantel-piece, the swing of the gilded pendulum being visible beneath. Bressant watched it with idle interest. He felt so weak, in mind and body, that the clock seemed company just fitted for his comprehension.

The door opened, by and bye, and Cornelia's smiling face peeped in, looking the sweeter for an expression of tender anxiety. Seeing that he was awake, her eyes took on an extra sparkle,

and she advanced a step into the room, still clinging with one hand to the door-knob, however, as if afraid to lose its support.

'You feel a little better, don't you? Is that mattress comfortable? I'm going to bring you your breakfast in a few minutes.'

Bressant only grew red and bit his moustache for answer. He would gladly have covered himself up out of sight, but he could not move hand or foot.

Cornelia had in her mind a little speech she meant to deliver to Bressant on the subject of the previous night's event, but at the critical moment she felt her courage forsaking her. The topic was so weighty; and then she shrank from speaking out what was in her head; perhaps because her auditor was there as well as her sentiments. Still, she felt she ought to try.

'Mr. Bressant,' began she, with a kindling look, 'Mr. Bressant, I—' here her voice faltered; 'Oh! you don't know—I can never tell you—I can never forget what you did last night!' This was the end of the great speech.

Bressant became still more red and uncomfortable. 'I made a fool of myself last night,'

said he, dejectedly. 'I wish you hadn't been there; if I'd known what a piece of work—'

'But you saved my papa's life!' interrupted Cornelia, in a blaze.

The young man looked as if struck with a new idea. It seeemed as if he had not before thought of looking upon the Professor as an independent quantity in the affair. The whole episode had presented itself to him as a difficult problem which he was to solve. The accident to himself had been an imperfection in the solution, of which he was deeply ashamed. But he was somewhat consoled by the reflection that the old gentleman had really needed preservation on his own account.

'That does make it better,' said he, half to himself, with the first approach to good humour he had shown since his misfortune.

Cornelia still remained glowing in the doorway, turning the latch backwards and forwards, not knowing what more to say, and yet unwilling to say nothing more. She did not at all comprehend Bressant's attitude, and therefore admired him all the more. What she could not understand in him was, of course, beyond her scope.

'You may think nothing of it, but I know I —I know we do—I can't say what I want to, and I'm not going to try any more; but I'm sure you know—or at least you'll find out, sometime—in some other way, you know.'

Bressant could not hear all this, nor would he have known what it meant if he had; but he could see that Cornelia was kindly disposed towards him, and was conscious of great pleasure in looking at her, and thought if she were to touch him, he would get well. He said nothing, however, and presently his bodily pain caused him to sigh and close his eyes wearily. Cornelia immediately kissed her soft fingers to him twice, and then vanished from the room, looking more like a blush than a tea rose. Before long she returned with the sick man's breakfast on a tray.

'Do you like to be nursed?' asked she, as she put the tray on a table and moved it up to the bedside.

'No!' said Bressant emphatically, and with an intonation of great surprise.

'Oh! why not?' faltered Cornelia, quite taken aback.

'I hate disabled people; they're monstrosi-

ties, and had better not be at all. I wouldn't nurse them.'

'You think there's no pleasure in doing things for people who cannot help themselves?' demanded Cornelia, indignantly.

'There can be no pleasure in nursing,' reiterated he.' 'It might be very pleasant to be nursed—by any one who is beautiful—if one did not need the nursing!'

Cornelia was becoming so accustomed to Bressant's undisguised manners, that she forgot to be disturbed by this guileless compliment. Many hours afterwards, when she was alone in her chamber, the words recurred to her devoid of the version his manner had given them, and then they brought the blood gently to her cheeks.

'You're very foolish,' said she, as she poured out some tea, and cut up a mutton chop into mouthfuls. 'Now you have to drink this tea, though you wouldn't the last time I poured you out a cup; and I'll give you your chop. Open your mouth.'

So the athlete of the day before was obliged to submit to having his teacup carried to his lips and tipped for him by a woman, and the

chop administered bit by bit on a fork. It was very degrading; but once in a while Cornelia accidentally touched him, or her face, lit up by interest in her occupation, came so near his own that he felt warmed and thrilled, and went near to admit it was worth all the broken bones in the world, and the sacrifice of pride accompanying them.

Ere breakfast was over, Professor Valeyon entered with his slippers, his pipe, and a remarkably benevolent expression for one of such impending eyebrows.

'Well, my boy,' said he—ever since the accident he had addressed Bressant thus—'you look in a better humour with yourself this morning. You'll be well used to this room before you leave it,' he continued with kindly gravity, as he felt his patient's pulse. 'You'll know all about the number and relative position of the bars and bunches of flowers on the wall-paper opposite, and how many feet and inches it is from the window-frame to the room corner, and which pane of glass is the crookedest, and how much higher one post of your bedstead is than the other; and plenty more things of that

kind. And to tell you the truth, my boy, I don't believe a course of such studies, by way of variety, will do you any harm. Now, let's look at this collar-bone of yours. Oh! Cornelia, you'd better be finishing your packing, hadn't you?' he added to his daughter, who was leaning on the back of his chair, sympathising with the sick man to her heart's content. She walked obediently to the door, but before she disappeared, turned and sent back a smile charged with all the warmth of her ardent womanly nature. Bressant got the whole benefit of it; and it lingered with him most of the morning.

'How long must I be here?' enquired he, after Cornelia was gone.

'Three months at least,' replied the surgeon; 'more if you worry yourself about it.'

'Three months!' repeated the young man, aghast. 'What's to become of my studies?' I can't hold a book; I can't write;—I had to have my breakfast fed to me this morning,' continued he, biting his moustache and looking away. The Professor smiled thoughtfully.

'I have hopes,' said he, 'that you'll know

more about Divinity when you come out of this room than you did before you went into it. We'll see when the time comes.'

'I've found out already that my bones are like other men's,' remarked Bressant, with a sigh.

'So much the better,' returned the old man. 'You never would have learnt that out of your Hebrew Lexicon. The best way to reach this young fellow's soul is through his body,' declared he silently to the bandage he was preparing for the broken head. 'This is nothing but a blessing in disguise.' But he had too much tact to carry the conversation further, and presently left his patient alone to digest his breakfast and the lesson it had inculcated.

This was Cornelia's last day at home; she was to take the eight o'clock train next morning to the city. The young lady's mood was unequal; sometimes she drooped; anon would break forth into much talk and merriment, which would evaporate almost as quickly as the froth of champagne. This was her first departure from home, and the ease, freedom, and beloved old ways of home life assumed more of their true value in her eyes. She had

acquired a sentiment of awe for Aunt Margaret's grandeur. She would be obliged to sleep in corsets and high-heeled shoes; everybody would be going through the figures of a stately minuet all day long.

Then she began to feel in advance the wrench of separating from those with whom her life had been spent, and from one other in whose company she had lived more—so it seemed to her—than in all the years since she ceased to be a child. Bressant was very prominent in her thoughts; nor could she be blamed for this, for the short acquaintance had been emphasised by a disproportional number of memorable events. First, there was the thunder-storm evening by the fountain; afterwards, the dance at Abbie's, and, following in quick succession, the celestial arch, the walk homewards, and the catastrophy in which he had borne the chief part. Besides, he was so different from common men.

'So perfectly natural and unaffected,' she argued to herself. 'He means all he says; of course I shouldn't let him say such things to me as he does, if it weren't so; but it would be affectation in me to object to it as it

is !' a most plausible deduction, by the way, but dangerous to act upon. To persuade herself that because he was an exceptional sort of person, his plain way of talking to her was justifiable, was to establish a secret understanding between him and herself, which placed her at a disadvantage to begin with; and unreservedly to accept compliments, even ingenuous ones, was to indulge in a luxury that must ultimately render callous her moral sensitiveness and refinement.

On the other hand, her toleration would be almost certain to have a bad effect upon Bressant, no matter how sincere and well-meaning he might be at the outset. A man is apt to know when he has power over a woman; and although he may have no expectation of it, nor wish to use it, yet, as time goes on and accustoms him to the idea, he must have strong principles or cold blood who does not finally yield to temptation. Plain speaking, where pleasant things are said, is smelling poisonous flowers for both parties.

A steady fall of rain set in during the night, and made the morning of departure grey. Blurred clouds rested helplessly on the backs

of the hills, and wept themselves into the wet valley without seeming to grow less lugubrious for the indulgence. There was no wind; trees and plants stood up and were soaked in passive resignation. The weather-beaten boards of the barn were drenched black, except a small place right under the eaves, which looked as if it had been painted a light grey. When the covered waggon was brought around to the gate, it speedily acquired a brilliant coat of varnish; Dolly's bay suit was streaked and discoloured, and the reins, thrown over her back, got all wet and uncomfortable.

Michael now came for Cornelia's trunk—a ponderous structure packed within an inch of its existence. Cornelia stood at the head of the stairs and saw it go thump! thump! thump! down to the bottom, and then scrape unwillingly over the oil-cloth to the door. Such a heavy-hearted old trunk as it was! Then she walked to the hall window, and watched its further journey along the glistening marble causeway, which dimly reflected its square ponderosity, and the tugging Michael behind it. Now the gate had to be pulled open; the rasp of its rattle and sharpness of its flap were

somewhat impaired by the wet, but it managed to give the trunk a parting kick as it went out, as much as to say the house was well rid of it.

'Cornelia!' called the Professor from down stairs, 'you've just five minutes to say good-bye in. Get through and come along!'

She passed through Sophie's open door; her sister held out her arms, her eyes overflowing with tears, but smiling with the strange perversity that possesses some people on these occasions. Cornelia was troubled with no such misplaced self-denial; she threw herself impatiently down by Sophie, and sobbed with all her might. Possibly it was more than one regret that found utterance then.

'You'll be all well and walking about when I come back, won't you, dear?' said she at last, in a shaking voice.

'I shall get well thinking what a splendid time you're having, darling.'

'Sophie—will you be quite the same to me when I come back?'

'Why, Neelie, dear, what a question! I shall always be the same to you.'

'But I feel as if there were going to be something—that something was going to come

between us;' and Cornelia began to droop like a flower under an icy wind. 'You never could hate me could you, Sophie?'

'Hate you! Neelie! What makes you speak so, dear? I have no misgivings.'

'Oh! I don't know—I don't know! it must be because I'm wicked!'

'*You* wicked, my darling sister! 'Come,' said Sophie, with an earnest smile, 'think only of how much we love each other, let the misgivings go.'

'Yes, we do love each other now, don't we? Whatever happens we'll always remember that. Good-bye, Sophie!' said Cornelia, with a strong hug and a long kiss.

'Good-bye, dear Neelie!'

Cornelia ran down stairs; her papa had just gone out to the waggon; she went into Bressant's room, and walked quickly up to the bedside.

'Here's your watch,' said she. 'I've kept it all safe, and wound it up and everything.' She had also slept with it under her pillow, and worn it all day in her bosom, but that she did not mention. She laid it down on the table as she spoke.

'Have you a watch?' asked Bressant.

'I had one, but it did not go very long. It was very small and pretty though;' this is the short and pathetic history of most ladies' watches.

'I'd like you to take something of mine with you that you can see and hear and touch: will you keep this watch?' asked he, fixing his eyes upon her. There was no time to deliberate; there was nothing she would like so much; she snatched it up without a word and stuck it into her belt.

'Good-bye!' said she, holding out her hand. Bressant took it, not without difficulty.

'I wish you were going to stay,' said he, gloomily, 'I should be more happy to have you here, than ashamed to need your help.'

Cornelia's eyes fell, and there was a tremulousness on her lips that might mean either smiles or tears. 'You'll be glad to see me when I come back, then, and you are well?'

'You'll be like a beautiful morning when you come,' returned he, with a touch of that picturesqueness that sounded so quaintly coming from him. All this time he had retained her hand, and now, looking her in the eyes, he drew it with painful effort towards his lips.

Cornelia's heart beat so she could scarcely stand, and her mind was in a confusion, but she did not withdraw her hand. Perhaps because he was so pale and helpless; perhaps the old argument—'it's his way—he don't know it isn't customary;' perhaps—for this also must have a place—perhaps from a fear lest he should make no attempt to regain it. She felt his bearded lips press against it. At the touch, a sudden weakness, a self-pitying sensation, came over her, and the tears started to her eyes.

'No one ever did that before to me,' she said, almost plaintively, for he had spoken no justifying words, and she was balancing between a remorseful timidity and a timid exultation.

'It's the first kiss I ever gave,' said he, and his own voice vibrated. 'Are you angry? it shall be the last if you are.'

'Oh, I'm not angry,' faltered poor Cornelia; and then she felt, or seemed to feel, a force drawing her down—scarcely perceptible, yet strong as death. She bent her lovely, glowing face, with its tearful eyes and fragrant breath, close down to Bressant's.

At that very moment, or even an incalculable instant before, the Professor's voice was heard calling loudly from without,

'Come—come! be quick! you'll be too late!'

She rose and fled from the room; but it was too late, indeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

NURSING.

AFTER seeing Cornelia off, Professor Valeyon bethought himself of Abbie: she must be wondering what had become of her late boarder and he resolved to stop at the house and give her an account of the accident. He had got some distance beyond the boarding-house when the idea occurred to him. Just as he was about to head Dolly round in the opposite direction, he discerned a figure beyond, beneath an umbrella, which looked very much like the person he was seeking. He drove on, and in a few minutes overtook her.

'Going up to the parsonage?' cried the old gentleman, getting gallantly down into the mud. 'Here, jump up into the waggon: I want to tell you about your—boarder.'

'He—there's nothing the matter with him, of course?' said Abbie, with a short laugh. She was looking very pale, and as if she had

not slept much of late. 'No, don't drive me to the parsonage: take me home, if you please, Professor Valcyon. Well, about Mr. Bressant?'

'Doing very well now: he was pretty seriously hurt.' And he went on to give a short account of what had happened, which Abbie did not interrupt by word or gesture: she sat with her head bent, and her lips working against each other.

'It's quite certain he'll recover?' she asked, when all was told.

'As certain,' quoth the Professor, non-committally, 'as anything in surgery can be.'

'It wouldn't be safe to move him, of course?'

'Not till he's a good deal better: you see, the collar-bone—

'Yes, I'll take your word for it,' said Abbie, very pale. 'Well, I'm glad he's in such good hands. If I had him he wouldn't be comfortable: I should be sure to do him more harm than good: it's better as it is; much better.' She spoke in an inward tone, looking vacantly out into the rain, and fumbling with the handle of her umbrella.

'But you'll come up and see him once in a while, at the parsonage?'

Abbie shook her head. 'No, no, Professor Valeyon; why should I? Do you suppose he wants to see me? do you suppose he's thought of me once since he went away? It would be a strange thing for an educated, intellectual, wealthy young man like him to do, wouldn't it?' asked Abbie, with a smile.

The Professor's eyes met hers for a moment, and then she looked away. Presently she spoke again:

'I'd a great deal rather leave this world as I've lived in it, for the last twenty years and more, than run any risk of making a blunder. I don't want things to change, Professor Valeyon: but if they do, it mustn't be through any act of mine, or yours either.'

By this time they had arrived at the boarding-house; and the old gentleman, having seen Abbie safely in to the door, drove homewards, frowning all the way, and at intervals shaking his head slowly. When he got home, he shut himself into his study, and there paced restlessly backwards and forwards, and stared out of the window across the valley. That open spot on the hill-top seemed to afford him little or no enlightenment or satisfaction: and when

he sat down to his solitary dinner, the frown had not yet cleared away.

The next day the rain was over, and a cart was sent up to the parsonage, containing Bressant's books, and such other of his belongings as he would be likely to need during his illness: and, accompanying them, a note from Abbie, expressing her regret at his misfortune, and her hopes that he would return to his rooms at her house as soon as his health was sufficiently re-established. The young man heard the note read, and congratulated himself, as he closed his eyes with a yawn, that he was not under his quondam landlady's ministrations.

But even the best circumstances could do little to lighten the insufferable tediousness of his confinement. Probably, however, such changes and modifications as may have been in progress in his nature, attained quicker and easier development by reason of his physical prostration. The alteration in his bodily habits and conditions paved the way for an analogous moral and mental process. The powers of a man are never annihilated; if dormant in one direction they will be active in another: and thus Bressant's passions, naturally deep and

violent, being denied legitimate outlet, had given vigour, endurance, and heat of purpose to the prosecution of his intellectual exercises. But as soon as these elements of his nature found their proper channels, they rushed onwards with far more dash and fervour than if they had never been dammed or deflected.

The combined effect upon the young man of the companionship of a beautiful woman, and his own broken bones, had been to make him feel and ponder on the nature of her power over him. The name of love was of course familiar to him, but he could hardly as yet, perhaps, grasp the full significance of the sentiment. Like other forms of knowledge, it must be approached by natural gradations. Here, if nowhere else, Bressant's life of purely intellectual activity was a disadvantage. His standpoints and views were artificial, speculative, and material. Love cannot be reduced to a formula, and then relinquished: nor is it ever safe to use as pattern for an untried work, the plan whereby something else was accomplished. Life has need of many methods.

Nearly a week of musing and speculation had passed over the young man's head, when one

day, as he was feeling unusually disconsolate, and wishing for unattainable things—Cornelia among others—he became aware, through some subtle channel of sensation, that somebody was standing in the doorway. He was lying in such a position that he could not see the door, so, after waiting a few moments, he exclaimed, with an invalid's irritability,

'Come in—or shut the door!'

'I'll come in, if you please,' answered an amused voice, which, though soft and low, possessed a penetrating quality which made it easily audible to the deaf man. He had never heard it before; but either because of this quality, or for some other more occult reason, he conceived a most decided liking for it.

Its owner now became visible. She was a delicate-looking girl, with a pale, conch-shell complexion, brown hair as fine as silk, and pleasant serene grey eyes. She was dressed very simply in white, with a blue band across her hair, and a blue scarf and sash around throat and waist. Her face, though showing signs of quiet strength, and of a self-confidence which was the flower of maidenly modesty and

innocence, was not beautiful according to any recognised standard. Bressant, from his intuitive perception of form and proportion, was aware of this. The forehead was too high, the nose irregular, the mouth lacked the perfect curve, and the teeth, though white and even, were not small enough for beauty.

Nevertheless Bressant was at once impressed with the young girl's presence. It was as if an ethereal cloud—such as that which, shone through by white sunlight, was just floating past the window—had eddied unexpectedly into his chamber, cooling and quieting him with the freshness of its heavenly vapour. Her eyes met his with a simple directness which made his glance waver, though he was not given to humility. Something, whereof neither science nor philosophy can take cognisance, seemed to emanate from her, elevating while it humbled him.

'If I'd known who you were, I—I shouldn't have asked you to shut the door!' said he, in an apologetic tone quite new to him.

'And how do you know who I am?' enquired the vision with a refreshing smile.

'I meant, what sort of a person you were; but you must be Miss Sophie: only I thought she was ill.'

'I am Miss Sophie, but I'm not to be thought ill any more. One invalid in the house is enough. I'm going to nurse you, and since I'm well, you may be twice as ill as ever, if you choose.'

'Well!' said Bressant, quite resignedly. He was becoming a very respectable patient.

'In what way do you want to be taken care of?' resumed the nurse, with a cheerful, business-like gravity which was at once becoming and piquant.

'Stay here and talk; I like to hear your voice: and you look so cool and pleasant.'

Very few people could oppose this young man in anything; he knew so well what he wanted, and demanded it so uncompromisingly. But Sophie's sense of fitness and propriety was as sound and impenetrable as adamant, and scarcely to be affected by any human will or consideration. She felt there was something not quite right in his manner and in the nature of his demand; and being in the habit of making people conform to her ideas, rather

than the reverse, she at once determined to correct him.

'If there's anything you wish me to read to you, I'll do it. I didn't come to sit down and talk to you; but if you like my voice, you can have more pleasure from it in that way.'

'It would be no use for you to read: I couldn't understand—I couldn't attend to your voice and the book at the same time.'

'We'd better wait, then,' said Sophie, turning her clear grey eyes upon him with an expression of demure satire. 'By-and-bye, perhaps, it won't have such a distracting effect upon you—when you come to know me better. If not, I must keep away altogether.'

Bressant's forehead grew red with sudden temper. He felt reproved, but was not prepared to acknowledge that he had merited it.

'You're very generous of your voice!' exclaimed he, resentfully. 'It's your fault, not mine, that it's agreeable. You're not so kind as your tone is.'

'I don't mean to be unkind,' said she, more gently, looking down. 'You don't seem to see

the difference between unkindness and—what I said.'

'What is the difference?' demanded he, taking her up.

Sophie paused a few moments, compassionating this great, wilful boy, and wondering what she could do for him. He had saved her father's life, thereby imperilling his own, and disabling himself, and she could not but admire and thank him for it. But his manner puzzled and annoyed her, and was an obstacle in the way of her would-be helpfulness.

'You wouldn't ask that question, I think, if you'd had sisters, or a mother,' she said at last. 'I suppose you've lived only with men. But you must learn how to treat young women from your own sense of what is delicate and true.'

Bressant stared and was silent: and Sophie herself was surprised at the authoritative tone she was assuming towards a bearded man whom she had never met before. But it was impossible to associate with Bressant without either yielding to him, or at least behaving differently from at other times, in one way or

another. He was a magnet that drew from people things unsuspected by themselves.

The pause was finally broken by the young man's accepting the situation with a grace, and even docility, which was nearly too much for Sophie's gravity.

'If you'll read, I will listen and understand it: you'd better try the Bible. I have a great deal of work to do upon that, still: you'll find one on the table by the window.'

She got the book, with whose contents she was considerably better acquainted than was the divinity student, and sat down to read, marvelling at the oddness of the situation; while he lay apparently absorbed in the cracks on the ceiling. By degrees—for having carried her point she could not help being more gracious—she began to allow a little embroidery of conversation to weave itself about the sacred text. She spoke to Bressant about such simple and ordinary matters as went to make up her life—the books she had read, the people she knew, the country round about, a few of her more inward thoughts. He listened, and said no more than enough to show he was attentive; sometimes making her laugh by the shrewdness of

his questions, and the quaintness of his remarks.

But he said nothing more to bring a grave look into the eyes of his young nurse; and she, finding him so gentle and boyish, and withal manly and profound, chatted on with more confidence and freedom; and, being gifted with fineness and accuracy of observation, and a clear flow and order of language and ideas, made talking a delight and a profit.

There was nothing formal or didactic about Sophie, and her talk rippled forth as naturally and spontaneously as a brook trickles over its brown stones, or the overhanging willows whisper in the wind. There was in it the unwearied and unweariable freshness of nature. And Sophie's vein of humour was as fine and pungent as the aroma of a lemon: it touched her words now and then, and made their flavour all the more acceptable.

So Bressant gained his end at last, though he had yielded it; and this fact was not lost upon the trained keenness of his observation. After his nurse was gone, he lay with closed eyes, and a general sensation of comfort, until

he fell asleep. Quiet dreams came to him, such as children have sometimes, but grown-up people seldom. Everywhere he seemed to follow a cool white cloud. But where was Cornelia?

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNTIMELY REMINISCENCE.

In spite of nursing and a very strong constitution, Bressant's recovery was slow. The fact was, his mind was restless and disturbed, and produced a fever in his blood. Large and powerful as he was, his physical was largely dependent on his mental well-being, as must always be the case with persons well organised throughout. He would never have been so muscular and healthy had his life not been an undisturbed and self-complacent one. These questions of the heart and emotions were not salutary to his body, however beneficial otherwise.

At the same time, no one is quite himself who is ill, and doubtless Bressant would have escaped many of his difficulties, and solved others with comparatively little trouble, if his faculties had not been untuned by illness While he was more open to the influx of al

these novel ideas and problems, he was less able to deal with and dispose of them. So the Professor, while encouraged by the observation of his apparent progress in the direction of human feeling and emotional warmth, was concerned to find him falling off in recuperative power.

Sophie was largely to blame for it. Bressant was getting to depend too much upon her society. He brightened when she came in, and was gloomy when she went out. He liked to talk and argue with her; to dash waves of logic, impetuous but subtle, against the rock of her pure intuitions and steady consistency. He was careful not to go too far; though, indeed, she usually had the best of the encounter. Of course his knowledge and trained faculties far surpassed Sophie's simple acquirements and modest learning; but she had a marvellous penetration in seeing a fallacy, even when she knew not how to expose it; and she mercilessly pricked many of the conceited bubbles of his understanding.

Doubtless she would have noticed the too prominent position which she had come to occupy in the invalid's horizon, had not her eyes, so

clear to see everything else, been blinded by the fact that he, also, was grown to be of altogether too much importance to her. She never for a moment imagined that anything but an abstract and ideal scheme for benefiting Bressant was actuating her in her intercourse with him. She proposed to educate him in pure beliefs and true aspirations; to show him that there was more in life than can be mathematically proved. But that she could derive other than an immaterial and impersonal enjoyment from it—Oh, no!

This was quixotic and unpractical, if nothing worse. What other means of imparting spiritual knowledge could a young girl like Sophie have, than to exhibit to her pupil the structure and workings of her own soul? But this could not be done with impunity; neither was Bressant a cup, to be emptied and then refilled with a purer substance. Young men and women with exalted and ideal views about each other, cannot do better than to keep out of one another's way. Unless they are prepared to mingle a great deal of what is earthly with their dreams, they will be apt, sooner or later, to have a rude awakening.

The conceit of her ideal crusade against Bressant's shortcomings blinded Sophie to what she could not otherwise have helped seeing—that she enjoyed his companionship for its own immediate sake. She had, perhaps, more direct and simple strength of character than he; but he made up in other ways for the lack of it. Besides, he had not taken measures to obstruct the natural keenness of his vision, and therefore saw, with comparative clearness, how the land lay; an immense advantage over Sophie, of course. But when he came to analysing and classifying what he saw, he found his intelligence at fault. That little episode with Cornelia was the only bit of experience he had to fall back upon; and that was more of a puzzle than an assistance to him.

Matters went on thus for about six weeks, at which time Bressant was still confined to his room, although decidedly convalescent. It had seemed to him for some time past that a crisis would soon be reached in his relations with Sophie, but what the upshot of it would be he could not conjecture. He only felt that at present something was concealed—that there were explanations and confessions to be made,

which would have the effect of putting his young nurse and himself upon more open and intimate terms. He looked forward to this culmination with impatience, and yet with anxiety.

One morning, when they had been reading Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' Cornelia's weekly letter was brought in, and subsequently the conversation turned upon her.

'I used to think she was much more beautiful than you,' remarked Bressant thoughtfully, twisting and turning the palm leaf fan he held in his hands. 'I don't think, now, that I knew what beauty was,' he added, concentrating his straight eyebrows upon Sophie, in a scrutinising look.

'No one could be more beautiful than Neelie,' said Sophie, with gentle emphasis. 'What has made you change your opinion?' As she spoke, she closed the book on her lap and leaned her cheek upon her hand. Some of the sunshine fell upon her white dress, but left her face in shadow. It struck Bressant, however, that the clear morning light which filled the room emanated from her eyes rather than from the sunshine.

'I don't know that I have changed my opinion,' said he, looking down again at the fan; 'I learn new things every day, that's all. Do you ever think about yourself?'

'I suppose I do, sometimes; nobody can help being conscious of themselves once in a while.'

'About what you are, compared with other people, I mean.'

'There's nothing peculiar about me; still, I may be different in some ways from other people,' answered Sophie, with simplicity.

'I can judge better about that than you; there was some use in deafness, and being alone, and thinking only of fame, and such things.'

'What use?' asked Sophie, leaning forward with interest, for he had never spoken about his former life before.

'The same way that a man who never drinks has a more delicate sense of taste than a drunkard,' returned Bressant, apparently pleased with his simile. 'I've seen so little of women, that I can taste you more correctly than if I had seen a great many. Understand?'

Sophie did not answer, being somewhat thrown out by this new way of looking at the

matter. There seemed to be some reason in it, too.

'If I'd associated with other people, I shouldn't have been sensitive enough to recognise you when we met; no one except me can know you, or feel you,' continued he, following out his idea.

Sophie began to feel a vague misgiving. What did this mean? What was going to be the end of it? Ought she to allow it to go on? And yet—most likely it meant nothing; it was only one of his queer fancies that he was elaborating. There did not seem to be anything suspicious in his manner.

'It wasn't easy even for me,' he resumed, throwing another glance at her; she sat with her eyes cast down, so that he could observe her with impunity. 'It would have been impossible unless you had helped me to it. You have taught me yourself, even more than I have studied you.'

Sophie started, and a look of terror, bewilderment, and passionate repudiation lightened in her eyes. How dared he—how could he, say that? how so falsely misrepresent her actions, and misinterpret her purposes? Her mind went staggering back over the past, seeking for means of self-justification and defence. She had only

meant to benefit him—to amplify and soften his character—to inspire him with more ideal views and aims; and to do this she had—what? Sophie paused and shuddered. Could it, after all, be true? Had she, forgetful of maidenly modesty and reserve, opened to this man's eyes her secret soul? invited him into the privacy of her heart, to criticise and handle it?—invited him!—brought forward and pressed upon his notice the thoughts and impulses which she should scarcely have whispered even to herself? Had she done this?

'You have taught me that there is no one like you in the world,' said Bressant. His voice sounded strangely to her, coming across such an abyss of shame, remorse, and dismay. Did he know the bitter satire his words conveyed? Sophie's face was hidden in her hands. She dared not think what might come next.

'Is it nothing to you to know that you are more to me than anything else?' demanded he; and his tone was becoming husky and unsteady. The passion that had been smouldering within him so long, unsuspected in its intensity even by himself, was now beginning to bestir itself and shoot forth jets of flame. 'Why have

you let yourself be with me—why have you made yourself necessary to me—if I was nothing to you?'

Sophie, in the extreme depths of her degradation and abasement, became all at once quiet and composed. She lifted her face, pale, and smitten with suffering, from her hands, and folding them in her lap, looked at Bressant calmly, because she understood herself at last, and felt that the time for hiding her head in shame had gone by.

'You have *not* been nothing to me,' said she, 'though I didn't know it before, or rather, I *would* not. I had an idea that I was leading you up to higher things, as an angel might; and all the time I was making use of God's truth, and recommendation, as it were, to gratify and shield my own selfishness and—' here her voice sank, and her lips quivered and grew dry; but she waited and struggled, and finally went on—'and immodesty. I don't know why I should tell you this—except that I've told you everything else, and this may save you from some of the wrong the rest has done you. But the most of it must remain irreparable.' A long sigh quivered up from Sophie's heart, and

quivered down again, like a pebble sinking through the water. Such a sigh in a woman is the sign of what can scarcely come twice in a lifetime.

'I don't understand anything about that; I don't want to!' exclaimed Bressant, with an impetuous gesture. 'What you've done seems to have been better than what you meant to do, at any rate. You've made yourself everything to me. Say that I am as much to you, and what more do we need? Say it! say it!' and in the vehemence of his appeal, the sick man half raised himself from his bed.

'I cannot! I cannot!' said Sophie, in a low, penetrating voice of suffering. 'If you were the lowest of all men, I could not. I came to you in the guise of an angel, and what I have done, what woman is there that would not blush at it? It may not be too late to save you——'

'Stop!' cried Bressant, with an accent of hoarse, masculine command such as she could not gainsay. 'It is too late!—I will not be saved! Look in my eyes, Sophie Valeyon, and tell me the name of what you see there!'

Her sad grey eyes, stern to herself, but tender

and soft to him as a cloud ready to melt in raindrops, met his, which were alight with all the fire that an aroused and passionate spirit could kindle in them. She saw what she had never beheld before indeed, but the meaning of which no woman ever yet mistook. It was her work—the assurance of her disgrace—the offspring of her self-seeking and unwomanly behaviour; and yet as she looked the blood rose gradually to her pale cheeks, and stained them with a deeper and yet deeper spot of red; her glance caught a spark from his, and her fragile and drooping figure seemed to dilate and grow stately as if inspired by some burst of glorious music. Bressant, in the mid-whirl and heat of his emotion, fell back upon the pillow whence he had partly raised himself, trembling from head to foot.

'Is it love?' he said, in a smothered tone that was scarcely more than a whisper. He was beaten down and overawed by the might and grandeur of the passion which, growing in his own breast, had become a giant that swayed and swept all things before it.

'Yes—love!' said Sophie, in a voice like the soft ring of a silver trumpet. Her heart was

steadied and strengthened by what mastered him. 'Love—it is above everything else. It has brought me down so low—perhaps, through God's mercy, it is the path by which I may rise again. You will guide me, dear?'

And with a gesture of divine humility, she put her hand in his, and looked down with the smile brightening mistily in her eyes.

At that moment—recalled, perhaps, by a chance similarity in position, gesture, or expression—came over him, like a sudden chill and darkness, the memory of his last interview with Cornelia.

CHAPTER XVI.

PARTING AN ANCHOR.

CORNELIA, upon her arrival in New York, had been met at the station by an emissary of Aunt Margaret, and conducted to a country seat some distance up the river. Four or five young ladies were already assembled there, and as many young gentlemen came up on afternoon trains, and availed themselves of Aunt Margaret's hospitality until business called them to the city again the next morning; except that on Saturdays they brought an extra change or two of raiment, to tide them over the blessed rest of Sunday.

'I've been so *ill*, my love—how sweet and fresh you *do* look! Give your Auntie a kiss—there. *Oh!* you naughty girl, how jealous all the girls will be of those *eyes* of yours!—so ill—*such* dreadful sick headaches—oh, yes! I'm a *great* sufferer, dear, a great *sufferer*—but no one, hardly, knows it. I tell *you*, you know, dear, because you are my own darling little

Cornelia. Oh! those sweet *eyes!* So ill—so *unable*, you know, to be *up* and *doing*—to be as I should wish to be—as I once *was*—as you are now, you—splendid—creature—you! Now you *must* let me speak my heart out to you, dear; it's my nature to do it, and I *can't* restrain it—foolish, I know, but I always *was* so foolish! oh dear! well—Ah! there's the first bell already. Let me show you your room, darling. As I was going to say, I've been so indisposed that I've been obliged to pet myself up a little here, before starting on our *tour*, you know; but in a week I mean to be well again—I *will* be. Oh! I have immense *resolution*, dear Neelie—*immense* fortitude, where those I love are concerned. There, this is your little nest—now, *one* more kiss. Oh! those sweet *lips!* Remember you sit by me at dinner.'

'What a funny old woman Aunt Margaret is!' said Cornelia to herself, after she had closed the door of her chamber. 'Such a queer voice—goes away up high, and then away down low, all in the same sentence. And what a small head for such a tall woman! and she's so thin! I do hope she won't go on kissing me so much with her big mouth! how fast

she does twist it about! and then her front teeth stick out so! and she keeps shoving that great black ear-trumpet at me, whenever she thinks I want to speak; and her eyes are as pale and watery as they can be, and they look all around you and never at you. Well, it's very mean of me to criticise the old thing so; she's as kind as she can be. I wonder whether she knows Mr. Bressant; her manner reminds me sometimes of him; in a horrid way, of course, but—poor fellow! what is he doing now, I'd like to know!' Here Cornelia's meditations became very profound and private indeed; she, meanwhile, in her material capacity, making such alterations and improvements in her personal appearance as were necessary to prepare herself for the table.

Every few minutes—oftener than any circumstances could have warranted—she pulled a handsome gold watch out of her belt and consulted it. She did not, to be sure, seem solely anxious to know the hour; she bent down and examined the enamelled face minutely; watched the second-hand make its tiny circuit; pressed the smooth crystal against her cheek; listened to the ceaseless beating of its little golden heart.

That golden heart, it seemed to her, was a connecting link between Bressant's and her own. He had set it going, and it should be her care that it never stopped; for at the hour in which it ran down—such was Cornelia's superstitious idea—some lamentable misfortune would surely come to pass.

The dinner-bell sounded; she put her watch back into her belt, bestowing a loving little pat upon it, by way of temporary adieu. Then, feeling pretty hungry, she ran down the broad, soft-carpeted stairs, with their wide mahogany bannisters—she would have sat upon the latter and slid down if she had dared—and entering the dining-room, which was furnished throughout with yellow oak, even to the polished floor, she took her place by her hostess's side. She had already been presented to the fashionable guests who sat around the ample table, and a good deal of the awe which she had felt in anticipation had begun to ooze away. Although much was said that was unintelligible to her, she could see that this was not the result of intellectual deficiency on her part, but merely of an ignorance of the ground on which the conversation was founded. As Cornelia stole

glances at the faces, pretty or pretentious, of the young ladies, or at the moustaches, whiskers, or carefully-parted hair of the young gentlemen, it did not seem to her that she could call herself essentially the inferior of any one of them. As to what they thought of her, she could only conjecture; but the gentlemen were extravagantly polite—according to her primitive ideas of that much-abused virtue—and the ladies were smiling, full of pretty attitudes, small questions, and accentuated comments. No one of them, nor of the young men either, seemed to be very hungry; but Cornelia had her usual unexceptionable appetite, and ate stoutly to satisfy it; she even tasted a glass of Italian wine at dessert, upon the assurance of Aunt Margaret that 'she must—*really* must—it would never do to come to New York without learning how to drink wine, you know;' and upon the word of the young gentleman who sat next to her that it wouldn't hurt her a bit—all wines were medicinal—Italian wines especially so; and so, indeed, it proved, for Cornelia thought she had never felt so genial a glow of sparkling life in her veins. She was good-natured enough to laugh at anything, and brilliant enough to make

anybody else laugh; and the evening passed away most pleasantly.

But Cornelia was no fool, to be made a butt of it; and her personality was too vigorous, her individuality too strong, not to make an impression and way of its own wherever she was. The young ladies tried in vain to patronise her: they had not the requisite capital in themselves; and the young gentlemen soon gave up the attempt to make fun of her; her vitality was too much for them, and they were, moreover, disconcerted by her beauty. Miss Valeyon, however, was new to the world, and her curiosity and vanity had large unsatisfied appetites. To have been patronised and made fun of would have done her little or no harm; but in gratifying these appetites she might do a good deal of harm to herself.

When the young gentlemen were in town, or in the smoking-room, the young ladies were of course thrown upon their own resources, and generally drifted together in little groups, to talk in low tones or in loud, to laugh or to whisper. Cornelia, who soon got upon terms of companionship with one or two members of these conclaves, could hardly do otherwise than

occasionally join the meetings. At first she found little or nothing of interest to herself in what they talked about. The discussion of dress, to be sure, was something, and she found she had much to learn even there. Then there was a great deal to be said about sociables, and theatres, and sets, and fellows; and there was also more or less conversation, carried on in a low tone that occasionally descended to a whisper, which, beyond that it seemed to have reference to marriage and kindred matters, was for the most part Greek to Cornelia. A kind of metaphor was used which the country-bred minister's daughter could not elucidate, nor could she comprehend how young ladies, unmarried as she herself was, could know so much about things which marriage alone is supposed to reveal.

Once or twice she had requested an explanation of some of these obscure points, but her request had been met, first by a dead silence, then by a laugh, and an enquiry whether she had no young married friends, and also whether she had ever read the works of Paul Féval, Dumas, and Balzac—all of which gave her little enlightenment, but taught her to keep

her mouth shut, and open her eyes and ears wider.

One day when 'Aunt Margaret' had invited her to a tête-à-tête in the boudoir, it occurred to Cornelia, in the wisdom of her heart, to take advantage of the opportunity to introduce the subject. She was a widow: was very good-natured; would be sure not to laugh at her, and could hardly help knowing as much as the young ladies knew.

'Oh!' exclaimed Mrs. Vanderplanck, 'as Cornelia entered, 'such a relief—such a *refreshment* to look at that sweet face of yours! There!—I must have my *kiss*, you know. Yes, I was just thinking of you, my love—so longing to have a quiet *chat* with you—your dear father!—such a *grand* man he is! such *genius*! Oh! *I* was his devoted. Tell me all about him—and that sweet *home* of yours—and *dear* little Sophie too. Oh! I *was* so shocked—so terrified!—to hear of her illness—and—let me see!—Oh! yes, and that new pupil your papa has—Mr. Bressant—*how* is he? *does* he behave well? *is* he pleasant? *do* you see much of him? *does* he keep himself quiet? —such a——'

'Why! how did you know about him?' interrupted Cornelia, into Mrs. Vanderplanck's ever-ready ear-trumpet. 'Is he a relation of yours, or anything?'

Aunt Margaret stopped short, and pressed her thin, wide lips together. She had never imagined but that Professor Valeyon had told his daughters through whose immediate instrumentality it was that Bressant made his appearance at the parsonage; but finding, from Cornelia's questions, that this was not so, she bethought herself that it might be well for her young guest to remain in ignorance, at least for the present. It was not too late, and after a scarcely perceptible pause, she made answer:

'It was in your dear papa's *answer* to my invitation, my love—Oh! so shocked I was dear little Sophie couldn't come—lay awake *all* that night with a headache—yes, *indeed!*—when he *wrote* to me, you know—such a dear noble letter it *was* too! Oh! I read it over a dozen —*twenty* times at least!—he mentioned this new pupil of his—seemed interested in him—of course I *can't* help being interested in whatever interests any of you dear ones, you know

—he mentioned his strange name and all—it *is* a strange name, isn't it, love?'

'It isn't his real name,' interposed Cornelia; 'nobody except papa knows who he is. It's just like one of those ancient names, you know—the Christian name and the surname in one.'

'Oh yes, I see—so odd, isn't it?—such a *mystery*, and all that—yes—so that's how I came to speak of him, I suppose. One gets *ideas* of a person that way sometimes, don't you know? though they may never have actually *seen* them at all. Oh! when I was a *young* thing, I was just full of those—*ideals*, *I* used to call them—Oh! you know all about it, I *dare* say!'

'He met with a very serious accident just before I came away,' said Cornelia to the ear-trumpet; 'he stopped Dolly—our horse—she was running away with papa in the waggon. He saved papa beautifully, but he was dreadfully hurt—his collar-bone was broken, and he was kicked, and almost killed. He's at our house now, and papa's taking care of him.'

At this information Aunt Margaret became very white, or, rather, bloodless, in the face.

She allowed the ear-trumpet to hang by its silver chain from her neck, and reaching out her hand to a recess in the writing-table at which she sat, she drew forth a small ebony box, set in silver, and carved all over with little figures in bas-relief. Opening it, she took out a few grains of some dark substance which the box contained, and slipped them eagerly into her large mouth. Cornelia watched her out of the corner of her eyes, and being a physician's daughter, she drew her own conclusions.

'Ho, no! that's where your sick headaches, and yellow complexion, and nervousness, and weak eyes come from, is it? You'd better look out! that's morphine, or opium, or some such thing—I know! and papa says that old ladies like you, who use such drugs, are liable to get insane, after a while, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you were to become insane, Aunt Margaret!'

This agreeable prophecy, being confined solely to Cornelia's thoughts, was naturally inaudible to Mrs. Vanderplanck. She murmured something about her doctor having prescribed medicine to be taken at that hour, and then, the medicine appearing to have an immediate and

salutary effect, she found her colour and her voice again, and took up the conversation.

'Shocking—Oh! shocking! *so* sad for the poor young man—no father—no—no mother there to care for him. He *is* an orphan, is he not?—no relatives I suppose—no one who *belongs* to him, poor boy! dear, dear!—but he's *not* fatally injured, is he?—not fatally?'

'Oh, no;' replied Cornelia, whose opinion of Aunt Margaret's character was much improved by this evidently sincere sympathy in the suffering of some one she had never seen. 'Oh, no; papa says he'll be all well in three months.'

'And he's staying at your house?—and under your dear father's care?'

'Yes, he is now. Before his accident he was boarding at Abbie's, down in the village. She would have been very kind to him, of course, but I suppose he'd rather be at our house, because papa can always be at hand.'

While Cornelia was delivering this into the black ear-trumpet, she turned her eyes away from Aunt Margaret's face, being in truth somewhat embarrassed at talking so much about the man who had her heart. Consequently she did

not observe the expression which crossed her companion's face, at her mention of the modest name of the boarding-house keeper. Her features seemed to contract and sharpen, and there was positively a glitter in her watery eyes, seemingly mingled of consternation, astonishment, and hatred. In another moment, the expression had passed away, or was softened into one of nervous alarm and anxiety; and even this, when she spoke, was well-nigh effaced.

'Certainly—yes *certainly!* your dear father —*what* a wise man he is! he *has* such a profound knowledge of medicine and surgery—all those things—so prudent—so careful! Still, a woman is a treasure, you know—a good sensible efficient woman is a *host*—Oh! yes—in a sick room. This boarding-house keeper, now—she's just such a person, I *dare* say—elderly, sober, experienced—a married woman, probably —with a large family, no doubt? Abbie—Abbie? what *did* you say her last name was, my love?'

Cornelia was so much amused at the idea of Abbie's being a married woman with a large family, that she did not observe how Aunt Mar-

garet, awaiting her answer, was all in a tremble. If she had not been laughing she could scarcely have helped seeing how the ear-trumpet shook, as it was presented to her.

Oh, no,' said she, 'she's not married, Aunt Margaret—at least not now, though I believe she's a widow, or something of that kind, you know—and she hasn't any children at all! As to her other name, I don't know it, and I believe hardly any one does. You see, she's one of that queer sort of people: she's very quiet, and always grave, and nobody knows much about her, except that she's very good, and has lived in the village for twenty years and more. I believe, though, papa has met her before, or knows something about her in some way; but he never says anything to us upon the subject.'

This was all that could be got out of Cornelia upon the topic of Abbie, and Mrs. Vanderplanck was obliged to swallow whatever uneasiness, curiosity, or misgiving she may have felt. In the midst of an exhortation to her young guest to repeat her visit daily to the boudoir, and regale her auntie with anecdotes of the dear old, interesting people in the village, Abbie and all, some one of the young ladies knocked at the

door and hurried Miss Valeyon off, without her having asked, as she had intended, for an explanation of the puzzling metaphorical allusions.

Mrs. Vanderplanck, left to herself, rocked backwards and forwards in her chair, with her hands clasped over her forehead, much in the way that an insane person might have done.

'Who'd have thought it! who'd have thought it! In the very village—in the very house—of all places in the world!—in the very house!—and he laid up—can't be moved—can't be taken away. Why didn't I know?—why didn't I find out?—careless—stupid—thoughtless! Curse the woman! couldn't I have imagined that she'd never be far away from her dear Professor—and we sent him there—we hid him away—we disguised his name—college was too public for him—let him finish his education in the country—and then we could escape away—to Germany—France—anywhere—and carry all the money with us—all the money!—half for me and half for him!—and what'll become of it now? Curse the woman! I knew she couldn't be dead. But she shan't have the money—no! she shan't, she shan't!

'Is it possible, now?—could it be that that girl was deceiving me? Did she know the woman's name, after all?—no, no! she hasn't the face for it—no hypocrite in her yet—not yet, not yet! Well, but what if it's all a mistake?—Why not a mistake? why not?—tell me that! Plenty of women called Abbie, aren't there? Why shouldn't this be one of them—one of the others? No, but the Professor had known her before—oh yes!—known her before! and there's only one Abbie that the Professor knew before! Curse her—curse her!

'Well, what if she is there? how will she know *him?* The Professor won't tell her—he can't—he dare not tell her!—for I made him promise he wouldn't, and I've got his promise, written down—written down!—Ah! that was smart—that was smart! Yes, but the boy looks like his father!—that'll betray him!—she'll know him by that—know him? well, just as bad—yes, and worse too, in the end—worse! Oh! curse her!

'Never mind. I know how to manage. If the worst comes to the worst, I know what to do! And I must write to him—not now—as

soon as he's well—he must come away. Even if it should turn out all a mistake, he must come away!—I'll write to him, as soon as he's well, that he must come away. And I'll question Cornelia again—ah! she's a handsome girl!—it's well I got her up here, out of the way!—I'll find out more from her. It may be a mistake, after all—it may, it may!'

While Aunt Margaret, sitting in her boudoir, thus took doubtful and disconnected counsel with herself, Cornelia was left to manage her little difficulties as best she might. Being tolerably quick in observing and putting things together, and unwilling to trust to intuitive judgments of what was safe or unsafe in the moral atmosphere, she set to work with all her wits, and not without some measure of success, to fathom the secrets of the tantalising freemasonry which piqued her curiosity. By listening to all that was said, laughing when others laughed, keeping silent when she was puzzled, comparing results and drawing deductions, she presently began to understand a good deal more than she had bargained for, was considerably shocked and disgusted, and perhaps felt desirous to unlearn what she had learnt.

But this was not so easy. Things she would willingly have forgotten seemed, for that very reason, to stick in her memory—nay, in some moods of mind to appear less entirely objectionable than in others. She had little opportunity for solitude—to bethink herself where she stood, and how she came there. During the day-time, there were the young ladies, here, there, and everywhere; there could be no seclusion. In the afternoons and evenings some admiring, soft-voiced young gentleman was always at her side, offering her his arm on the faintest pretext, or attempting to put it round her waist on no pretext at all; who always found it more convenient to murmur in her ear, than to speak out from a reasonable distance; whose hands were always getting into proximity with hers, and often attempting to clasp them; whose eyes were for ever expressing something earnest or arch, pleading or romantic—though precisely what, his lingering utterance scarcely tried to define: who never could 'see the harm' of these and many other peculiarities of behaviour; and indeed it was not very easy to argue about them, although the young gentlemen never shrank from the dispute, and never failed to

have on hand an inexhaustible assortment of syllogisms to combat any remonstrance that might be advanced withal: while at the worst they could always be surprised and hurt if their conduct were called into question. Well, they appeared to be refined and high-bred. Compare them with Bill Reynolds! And the flattery of their attention, and the preference they gave her over the other girls, was not entirely lost upon Cornelia.

In the absence of both gentlemen and ladies, there, on an easily accessible shelf in the library, were those works of Dumas, Féval, and the rest, to which Cornelia's attention had been indirectly invited. She had a sound knowledge of the French language, and an ardent love of fiction, and beyond question the books were of absorbing interest.

At first, indeed, Cornelia, as she read, would ever and anon blush, and look around apprehensively, for fear there should be an observer somewhere; and this, too, at passages which a week before she would have passed over without noticing, because not understanding them. If any one appeared, she hid the book away in the folds of her dress, or under the sofa-cushion,

and put on the air of having just awakened from a nap. By-and-bye, however, when she had become a little used to the tone of the works, and had asked herself, what were the books put there for, unless to be read, she plucked up courage, as her young friends would have said—albeit angels might have wept at it—and overcame her notions so far as to be able to take down from its shelf and become deeply interested in one of the Frenchiest of the set, while three or four people were sitting in the library!

A triumph that! Howbeit, when she went to bed that night, there was a persistent pain of dry unhappiness in her heart, and a self-contemptuous feeling, which she tried to get the better of by calling it *ennui*. But in time a kind of hardness, at once flexible and impenetrable, began to encase her, rendering her course more easy, less liable to embarrassment, more self-confident than before.

At length a crisis was brought on by the attempt of the boldest of her admirers to kiss her. She repelled him passionately, facing him with gleaming eyes, and lips white with anger and disgust. He was surprised, at first—

then angry; but she spoke to him in a way that cowed, and finally almost made him ashamed of himself. He even went so far, afterwards, as to try to knock a fellow down for speaking disrespectfully of 'Neelie.' For her own part, she locked herself into her room, and cried tempestuously for half an hour; then she spent a still longer time in lying with her heated face upon the pillow, reviewing the incidents of her life since Bressant had entered into it. He was the superior of any man she had met before or since: she was sure of it now; it could no longer be called the infatuation of inexperience. She took herself well to task for the recent laxity and imprudence of her conduct; did not spare to cut where the flesh was tender; and resolved never again to lay herself open to blame.

This was very well, but the mood was too strained and exalted to be depended upon. Cornelia got up from the disordered bed, put it to rights again, washed her stained face carefully, rearranged her hair, and went down-stairs. All that afternoon she was cold, grave, and reserved; enquiries after her health met with a chilling answer, and her friends wisely concluded

to leave her malady, whatever it were, to the cure of time. As dinner progressed, Cornelia began to thaw: when Mr. Grumblow, the member of Congress, requested her, with solemn and oppressive courtesy, to do him the honour of taking a glass of wine with him, she responded graciously; and as the toasts circulated, she first looked upon her ideal resolves with good-humoured tolerance, and then they escaped her memory altogether. She became once more lively and sparkling, and carried on what she imagined was a very brilliant conversation with two or three people at once. By the time she was ready to retire, she had practised anew the whole list of her lately abrogated accomplishments; and she wound up by picking the French novel out of the corner into which she had disdainfully thrown it twelve hours before, reading it in bed until she fell asleep, and dreaming that she was its heroine. And yet she had not forgotten to wind up Bressant's watch, and put it in its usual place under her pillow.

It might seem strange that his memory should not have kept her beyond the reach of deleterious influences. But a young girl's love is

anything but a preservative, if it shall yield her, in any aspect, other than such pure and delicate thoughts as she would not scruple to whisper in her mother's ear, or to ask God's blessing on at night. Should there be any circumstance or incident, however seemingly trifling and unimportant, in her reminiscences, which nevertheless keeps recurring to the mind with a slight twinge of regret—a feeling that it would have been just as well had it never happened—then is love a dangerous companion. Gradually does the trifling spot grow upon her; in trying to justify it, she succeeds only in lowering the whole idea of love to its level; and this once accomplished, in all future intercourse with her lover she must be undefended by the shield of her maidenly integrity. And not all men are great enough not to presume on woman's weakness, even though it be that woman, to assert whose honour and purity they would risk their lives against the world.

Some such quality of earthiness Cornelia may have felt in the course of her acquaintance with Bressant, preventing her love from ennobling and elevating her. Alas! if it were so. If

she cannot draw a high inspiration from the affection which must be her loftiest sentiment, what shall be her safeguard, and who her champion?

In the course of ten days or a fortnight, Aunt Margaret announced that the condition of her head would admit of travelling, and the long-expected tour began. But the more important consequences of Cornelia's fashionable experiences had already taken place.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOPHIE'S CONFESSION.

SOPHIE did not stay long in the invalid's room after the awakening they had undergone with respect to one another. She went instinctively to her father's study, and, entering the open door, kissed the old man ere he was well aware of her presence. He took her affectionately upon his knee, and hugged her up to him with homely tenderness.

'My precious little daughter!' quoth he; 'what would your old father do without you?'

'Am I so much to you, papa?' asked she, with her cheek resting upon his shoulder.

'Very much—very much, Sophie: too much, perhaps; for I don't see how I could bear to lose you.'

'Do you mean to have me die, papa?'

'How is your sick boy getting along?' re-

turned the Professor, clearing his throat, and not seeming to hear his daughter's words.

Sophie caught a breath, and paled a little at the thought of the news she had to tell about the sick boy. Her father had just told her she was precious to him, and she felt that to be married might involve a separation virtually as complete as that of death, and perhaps harder to bear. But, again, she needed his sympathy and approval: and sooner or later he must hear the truth. She was not, perhaps, aware that etiquette should have closed her lips upon the subject until after Bressant had spoken to the Professor; at all events, she had no intention of delegating or postponing her confidence.

'He seemed quite well when I left him. I have been having a—talk with him, papa.'

'He begins to show the effects of being talked to by you, my dear. You're a wise little woman in some ways, that's certain! and have done him good in more ways than one,' said papa, with parental complacency.

Sophie shrank at this, remembering how lately she had fed herself with the same idea. She had learnt a great deal about herself since discovering how little of herself she knew.

'He is a—man!' said she, trying to throw into the word an expression of its best and loftiest meaning. 'I can do very little to help him.'

'Hope to see him a man, some day, my dear,' returned the Professor, gathering his eyebrows. 'Has a great many faults at present. Why, in some respects, he's as ignorant and inexperienced as a child. Very one-sided affair still, I fear, that soul of his!'

'One-sided, papa?'

'Yes: don't believe it would carry him very far towards heaven, as it is now,' said the old gentleman, whose severity of judgment was cultivated in this instance as a preservative against possible disappointment. 'He needs melting in a crucible.'

'What does that mean?'

'If you weren't a wise little woman, as I said, I shouldn't be talking about my pupil's character and management with you, my dear. But I can trust you as well as if you were forty:' and here he gave her another little hug, which made Sophie feel like a receiver of stolen goods. 'Well, now, theorising won't do a young fellow like that much good. He needs something real—that he can take hold of, and

that'll take hold of him. You and I can't give it him: not more than an impetus in the right direction, at any rate. But the only thing that can make his future tolerably secure—make it safe to count upon him (or upon any other man, for that matter), is for him to fall heartily and soundly in love, in the old-fashioned way, and with a strong-hearted, worthy woman.'

'Oh, papa! do you really think marriage will help him to be greater and better?'

'It's the only thing for him, my dear,' said Professor Valeyon; and although he was looking his guilty little daughter straight in the face, and at such short range, too, this would-be sharp-sighted old man of wisdom never thought to ask himself why she blushed so. 'As soon as he gets well again, I must see to getting him somewhere where he can have a chance to profit by what we have done for him.'

'Papa,' said Sophie, sitting up, and stroking the old gentleman's white beard, 'you don't know how happy it makes me to hear you think that to love and to be loved will be good for him.'

'So anxious to get rid of him, eh?'

'No: oh! papa, don't you see? it's because

—because I *never* want to get rid of him!' and Sophie, catching her father suddenly around the neck, hid her face in his linen coat collar.

The Professor, his features discharged of all expression, sat stone still, looking straight before him. Had Death been embracing him, instead of his daughter, he could hardly have been struck more motionless. Existence, spiritual as well as physical, seemed for a space to have come to a standstill.

By-and-bye, startled at his silence, Sophie raised her head and looked at him with alarmed eyes. With an effort, he turned his face towards her, and smiled as naturally as though his mouth had been frozen.

'I'm an old man, you see, my dear: a surprise like this makes me feel it,' he made shift to say, in an uncertain voice. 'So—you're engaged to each other?'

'We're waiting for you to say we may be, papa.'

'It is right—it is just!' said the Professor, solemnly, though still with a sluggish utterance. 'I sought to glorify God to the end of mine own glorification, and lo! He hath taken from me

my own heart's blood!' Swept off his feet by the profundity of his emotion, the ministerial form of speech, so long disused, rose naturally to the old man's lips.

But presently, the paralysing effect of the shock beginning to wear off, he drew a few long breaths, and found himself growing very hot. He took out his handkerchief and wiped away the perspiration that had gathered on his forehead. Then he took his little daughter strongly yet tremblingly to his heart, and kissed her more than once.

'God bless you! my darling—my Sophie—you're my Sophie still, if you are in love with that—great overgrown rascal. I'm a fool—an old fool!—Well—and how long has this been going on between you, my darling?'

Sophie's heart, which, in the passionate tumult of her recent interview with her lover, had remained so steady and unfaltering, began now to beat with such violence as to impede her utterance and visibly to shake her. She was resolved to show herself to her father even as she was.

'I hardly can say how long, papa—I think

—I think it must have been a—a long time—at least on my side. Oh! I have been so false—so false to myself, and so unwomanly! I have courted him, papa—*I*, papa—think of it! I've thrown myself in his way, and—and made him interested in me; and talked to him about things that—no one but his mother, or you, should have done. Poor fellow!—I've forced myself upon him, papa. I took advantage of his illness and helplessness, and pretended all the time I was thinking only of his spiritual welfare, and—and not of—of anything else. That was the wickedest part. And yet somehow I deceived myself too—or rather, I wouldn't see the truth: and I didn't know—papa, I really believe I didn't know that I—loved him, till he—till he began to speak of it: then it seemed suddenly to fill all my heart, as if it had always lived there. For I succeeded, papa: I've won his love, and oh! he loves me so! he loves me so! and so I've found my punishment in my happiness. God is so just and good. The happier his love makes me, you see, the more I shall be humbled to think how it became mine. It is well for me, for I was proud and reserved and full of self-conceit. And you really think it

will not hurt him to love me, and to have me love him, papa?'

'Stuff and nonsense!' growled the old gentleman testily: 'Hurt him!'

But the Professor was really a very wise man, in spite of his occasional blindness: and he refrained from showing Sophie the exaggeration and distortion which marked the view she took of her conduct. He saw it would involve lowering the high integrity of her ideal conceptions respecting delicacy and honour—hardly worth while, merely for the sake of explaining the distinction between a trifling piece of self-deception and mistaken vanity, and the severe and unrelenting sentence which Sophie had passed upon herself. Meanwhile, every word she had uttered had been an indirect, but none the less telling blow upon a sore place in his own conscience. It was long since Professor Valeyon had stood so low in his own self-esteem.

They sat awhile in silence, Sophie nestling up to her father as if seeking protection from the very love that had come to her; and he sighed, and sighed again, and coughed, and pulled his nose and his beard, and finally blew

his nose. Then, depositing Sophie upon her feet, he got slowly up, stretched himself, and went for his pipe.

'Run off, my dear. Go up in your room, or out in the garden, or somewhere. I must be alone a little while, you know: must think it all over, and see how things stand. Besides, I must step in and see this fellow who's going to rob me of my daughter, and tell him what I think of him. Come, off with you!'

'You'll be happy about it—you'll forgive us, won't you, papa?' she said, turning at the door.

The old gentleman shuffled heavily up to her, and kissed her on the forehead.

'God bless you, and God's will be done, my darling,' said he: but at that moment he could say no more.

An hour afterwards, however, when the Professor knocked the ashes out of his second pipe, and laid his hand upon the latch of Bressant's door, the expression upon his strongly-cut features was neither gloomy nor severe. There was a look in his eyes of benignant sweetness, all the more impressive because it made one wonder how it could find a place beneath such

stern eyebrows and so deeply-lined a forehead. But cutting off an offending right hand, although a bitter piece of work enough for the time being, may, in its after effect, work as gracious a miracle, in an older and more forbidding gentleman even than Professor Valeyon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FLANK MOVEMENT.

BRESSANT was lying comfortably upon his bed, with his eyes closed: no one would have imagined there had been any outburst or convulsion of passion in his mental or emotional organism. He breathed easily; there was a pale tint of red in his cheeks, above his close brown beard; his forehead was slightly moist, and his pulse, on which the surgeon laid his finger with professional instinct, beat quietly and regularly. In entering upon the world of love, all marks of wounds received upon the journey seemed to have passed away.

He opened his eyes at the Professor's touch, and fixed them upon the old gentleman in such a serene stare of untroubled complacency as one sometimes receives from a baby nine months old.

'Well, sir,'—the Professor, from some subtle delicacy of feeling respecting the prospective

change in their relationship, adopted this form of address in preference to that more paternal one he had been in the habit of using since Bressant's accident—'Well, sir, how do you find yourself now?'

'Much better: I shall soon be well now. I feel differently from ever before—very light and full here,' said the young man, indicating the region of his heart.

'I've seen Sophie,' observed Professor Valeyon, after a somewhat long silence, which Bressant, who had calmly closed his eyes again, showed no intention of breaking.

'Sophie and I love each other,' responded he, meditatively, and rather to himself than to the father. The latter could not but feel some surprise at the untroubled confidence the young man's manner displayed. Before he could put his thought into fitting words, the other spoke again.

'I've been thinking, I should like to marry her.'

'You'd like to marry her?' repeated the old gentleman, with a mixture of sternness and astonishment, his forehead reddening. 'What else do you suppose I expected, sir?'

Bressant turned over on his side, and regarded him with some curiosity. 'Do all people who love each other, or because they love each other, marry?' demanded he.

For a moment, the Professor seemed to suspect some latent satire in this question; but the young man's face convinced him to the contrary.

'In many marriages, there's little love—true love—on either side; that's certain,' said he, passing his hand down his face, and looking grave. 'But marriage was ordained for none but lovers.'

'The reason I want to be married to Sophie is, because I love her so much I couldn't live without her,' resumed Bressant, as if stating some unusual circumstance.

'Humph!' ejaculated the Professor, partly amused and partly puzzled.

Bressant rubbed his forehead, and fingered his beard awhile, and then continued:

'We've been reading poetry lately, and romances, and such things. I used to think they were nonsense—good for nothing; because they came out so beautifully, and represented love to be so great an element in the world.

But now I see they were not good enough: they are much below the truth: I mean to write poetry and romances myself!'

This tickled Professor Valeyon so much, that he burst out in a most genuine laugh. The intellectual animal of two or three months before seemed to have laid aside all claims to what his brain had won for him, and to be beginning existence over again with a new object and new materials. And had Bressant indeed been a child, the succession of his ideas and impulses could hardly have been more primitive and natural.

'What's to become of our Hebrew and History, if you turn poet?' enquired the old gentleman, still chuckling.

Bressant turned his head away and closed his eyes wearily. 'I don't want anything more to do with that,' said he. 'Love is study enough, and work enough, for a lifetime. Mathematics, and logic, and philosophy—all those things have nothing to do with love, and couldn't help me in it. 'It's outside of everything else: it has laws of its own: I'm just beginning to learn them.'

'A professional lover! well, as long as you recognise the sufficiency of one object in your

studies, you might do worse, that's certain. But you can't make a living out of it, my boy.'

'I don't need money: I have enough: if I hadn't, money making is for men without hearts; but mine is bigger than my head: I must give myself up to it.'

'That won't do,' returned the Professor, shaking his head. 'Lovers must earn their bread and butter as well as people with brains. Besides,' here his face and tone became serious, 'there's one thing we've both forgotten. This matter of your false name—you can't be married as Bressant, you know: and if the tenure of your property depends, as you said, on preserving the incognito, I have reason to believe that you stand an excellent chance of losing every cent of it, the moment the minister has pronounced your real name.'

'No matter!' said the young man, with an impatient movement, as if to dismiss an unprofitable subject. 'I shall have Sophie: my father's will can't deprive me of her. I don't want to be famous, nor to have a great reputation—except with her.'

The old man was touched at this devotion, unreasonable and impracticable though it was.

He laid his hand kindly on the invalid's big shoulder.

'I don't say but that a wife's a good exchange for the world, my boy: I'm glad you should feel it, too. But when you marry her, you promise to support her, as long as you have strength and health to do it. It's a natural and necessary consequence of your love for her'—and here the Professor paused a moment to marvel at the position in which he found himself—stating the first axioms of life to such a man as this pupil of his:—'and you should be unwilling to take her, as I certainly should be to give her, on any other terms. If your hands are empty, you must at any rate be able to show that they won't always continue so.'

'Well: but I don't want to think about that just now: I can be a farmer, or a clerk: I can make a living with my body, if I can't with my mind: and I can write to Mrs. Vanderplanck, sometime, and find out just how things are.'

'Very well—very well! or perhaps I'd better write to her myself—well—and as long as you are on your back, there'll be no use in troubling you with business—that's certain! And

perhaps things may turn out better than they look, in the end.'

As Professor Valeyon pronounced this latter sentence, he smiled to himself pleasantly and mysteriously. He seemed to fancy he had stronger grounds for believing in a happy issue, than, for some reason, he was at liberty to disclose. And the smile lingered about the corners of his mouth and eyes, as if the issue in question were to be of that peculiarly harmonious kind usually supposed to be reserved for the themes of poems, of the conclusions of novels.

'I never was interested to hear of the every day lives of men who have loved, and wanted to make their way in the world: for I never expected I should be such a man. Now, I'm sorry: it would have been useful to me, wouldn't it?'

'Perhaps it might,' responded the old gentleman, musing at the change in the attitude of the young man's mind—once so self-sufficient and assertive, now so dependent and inexperienced. 'Very few lives are bare and empty enough not to teach one something worth knowing. I know the events of one man's life,' he added, after a few moments of thoughtful

consideration, 'perhaps it might lead to some good, if I were to tell them to you.'

'Did he marry a woman he loved?' demanded Bressant.

'You can judge better of that when you hear what happened before his marriage,' returned the Professor, apparently a little put out by the abruptness of the question. 'He made several mistakes in life: most of them because he didn't pay respect enough to circumstances: thought, that to adhere to fixed principles was the whole duty of a man: nothing to be allowed to the accidents of life, or to the various and unaccountable natures of men; their uncertainty, fallibility, and so on. One of the first resolutions he made—and he's never broken it, for when he grew wise enough to do so, the opportunity had gone by for ever—was never to leave his native country. He wanted to prove to himself, and to everybody else whom it might concern, that a man of fair abilities might become learned and wise, without ever helping himself to the good things that lay beyond the shadow of his native flag. 'The majority of people have to live where they're born,' was his argument: "I'll be their representative." Well, that would seem all well

enough: but it stood in his way twice—each time lost him an opportunity that has never come again—the opportunity to be distinguished, and perhaps great: and the opportunity to have a happy home, and a luxurious one. It was better for him, no doubt, that his life was a hard and disappointed one, instead of—as it might have been: he's had blessings enough, that's certain: but he has much to regret, too: the more, because the ill effects of a man's folly and wilfulness fall upon his friends quite as often, and sometimes more heavily, than upon himself.

'He was a poor man in college, and an orphan. The property of his family had been lost in the war of 1812: from then till he was twenty-one, he had followed a dozen trades, and saved a couple of hundred dollars: and he'd picked up book-learning enough to enter the Sophomore class. The first thing he did was to make a friend: he loved him with his whole heart: thought nothing was too good for him, and so on. He and his friend led the class for three years: and up to the time of the last examination, he was first and his friend second. In the examination they sat side by side: one

question the friend couldn't answer; the other wrote it out for him: after the examination the two papers were found to be alike in the answer to that question, and the friend was summoned before the faculty, and asked if he had copied it. He denied it—said it had been copied from him: so he took the first rank in graduating, and the other was dropped several places.

'What became of their friendship after that?' enquired Bressant.

'He I'm telling you of never knew anything of what his friend had done till long afterwards. Well, the faculty and some of the wealthy patrons of the university determined to send the first scholar abroad, to finish his education: he accepted the offer eagerly, and sailed for Europe without bidding his friend good-bye. Afterwards the faculty made the same offer to him, on the consideration that he had stood so well during his course, until the examination. But he declined it: it was contrary to his principle of never leaving his country.'

'What sort of a man was the friend?' asked Bressant, who was paying close attention, with his hand at his ear.

'Clever, with a winning manner, and fine

looking. Had a pleasant easy voice; never lost his temper, that I know of.' The Professor paused, perhaps to arrange his ideas, ere he went on. 'The man I'm telling you of left the college-yard with as much of the world before him as lies between the fifteenth and twenty-fifth parallels of latitude, and the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. He'd made up his mind to be a physician; and in a year he was qualified to enter the hospital; worked there four years, and by the time he was twenty-nine, he had an office of his own and a good practice.

'At last he fell in love with a beautiful woman; she was the daughter of one of his patients—a Southerner with a little Spanish blood in him. The young doctor had—under Providence—saved the man's life; and since he himself came of a good family—none better—and had a respectable income, there wasn't much difficulty in arranging the match. The only condition was, that the father should never be out of reach of his daughter, as long as he lived.'

'Was this Southerner rich?'

'Very rich; and a dowry would go with the

daughter, enough to make them more than independent for the rest of their lives. Well, just about that time, the friend who had gone to Europe, came back. He'd done well abroad, and was qualified for a high position at home. He was engaged to marry a stylish, aristocratic girl, who was not, however, wealthy. But he seemed very glad to see the doctor, and the doctor certainly was to see him, and invited him to stay at his house a while: and he introduced him into the house of his intended wife.'

Here the Professor broke off from his story, and getting up from his chair, he passed two or three times up and down the room; stopping at the window to pull a leaf from the extended branch of a cherry-tree growing outside, and again by the empty fire-place, to roll the leaf up between his finger and thumb, and throw it upon the hearth. When he returned to the bedside, he dropped himself into his chair with the slow, inelastic heaviness of age.

'The fellow played him a scurvy trick,' resumed he, presently. 'Exactly what he said or did will never be known, but it was all he safely could to put his friend in a bad light. It was because he wanted the young lady for

himself; he was ambitious, and needed her money to help him on. What he said made a good deal of impression on the father; but the daughter wouldn't believe it then; at any rate she loved the doctor still, and would, as long as she knew he loved her.'

'Why didn't the other manage to make her think he didn't?'

'Well, sir, he did manage it,' returned the Professor, compressing his white-bearded lips, and lowering his eyebrows. 'He told the father some story of having met relations of his in Spain; told him the climate would cure him of all his ailments without need of a physician; and persuaded him to make the journey, at last. The doctor heard of it first by a note written by his intended father-in-law. It contained no request nor encouragement to accompany them—of course the daughter was to go too; her father wouldn't separate from her. But the doctor's friend had not trusted only to that: he knew that the other's resolution never to leave his country was not likely to be broken, so he was quite secure.'

'And the doctor knew nothing of how his friend was cheating him?'

'No, not then. Far from it, he showed him the letter, and asked him for advice. He never dreamed of doubting his constancy, either to himself, or to the girl he was engaged to marry. His friend counselled him to write a letter to her he meant to make his wife, explaining his position, and asking her not to leave him. He would carry it to her, and advocate it himself, he said, and do all in his power to influence the father. The young doctor didn't altogether relish this course: nevertheless he trusted in his friend, wrote the letter and gave it into his hands.

'He never saw his friend after that day. The next morning came an answer from the young lady—a cruel and cold rejection of him—repudiation of his love, and a doubt of his honour. It bewildered him, and for a time crushed him. Long afterwards he found out that she had never seen the letter he wrote, but a very different one, of his friend's concoction.

'Very soon afterwards they were gone—all three! and before a year was passed, he heard that his friend and the daughter were married: and the father died of a fever contracted in Spain.

'He tried to go on as usual for several months, but it was no use. At last he left his practice, and all his connections, and wandered over the United States—through towns and wildernesses. He rode across the plains on a mustang; clambered through the gorges of the Rocky Mountains; saw the tide come in through the Golden Gate at San Francisco. He pushed north as far as Canada, and thence came down the Mississippi to New Orleans. From there he crossed to the Pacific coast again, and lived to find himself a second time in San Francisco. He didn't stay there long, but struck overland, slanting southwards, and in four or five months appeared at Charleston, South Carolina. So he worked up the Atlantic coast to New York. By the time he got there, he was older and wiser, and strengthened, body and mind, by a rough experience. He resolved to travel no more; but, as yet, it was not in his power to feel happy.

'Much had happened in his absence. His friend, after living three or four years with his wife in Europe, was separated from her—not, however, by a regular divorce—and she had disappeared, and had not since been heard of.

It was reported that she was dead. She had left with her husband a son, two or three years old, at that time a sickly little fellow, scarcely expected to live. It was supposed that the mother had discovered that it was her money and not herself that her husband cared for; and, perhaps, too, may have imagined him to be still thinking of his first love, who, indeed, was said to have in some way fomented the quarrel between them; though how, or to what end, was never known. She, by the way, after an absence of some years from New York, suddenly reappeared there, and married a wealthy old Knickerbocker, who died not long afterwards, and left her his property. She became eminent in society, and was intimate with all the most distinguished people. Her former lover returned from Europe with his little son, and, I believe, settled somewhere in the neighbourhood of New York. They met, and, I understand, came to be on very friendly terms with one another; but the conditions of their lives would have prevented the possibility of marriage, even had they desired it.

'Well, it was before the old Knickerbocker's death that he I am telling you of first arrived

in the city. He gave up medicine, and devoted himself to other studies; and in the course of a few years he found himself occupying the chairs of History and of Science at the University of New York. He also paid some attention to politics, and became, for a while, a person of really considerable renown and distinction. He was respected by the most influential persons in the city. Among the rest, he became acquainted with the widow—as she was by this time—of the Knickerbocker—and she shewed him every kindness and attention. But he did her the injustice of not believing her kindness genuine; he imagined that she cared for nothing but fashion and display, and was polite to him only because she thought he would add a little to her drawing-rooms. At length, a sudden weariness of his mode of life coming over him, he resigned his public positions, and his professorships, and took lodgings in the family of a poor clergyman in Boston. While there, he took up the study of Divinity, and before long was fully qualified for ordination. But at this time he fell, all at once, dangerously ill, and lay at death's door.

'He owed his life to the care that the daughter of the clergyman took of him. She

was a sweet, gentle girl, a good deal younger than he; but she grew to love him—perhaps because she had saved him from death. When he recovered, they were married, and found a great deal of happiness; there was no more passionate love, for him, of course; but he could feel gratitude, and tenderness, and a steady and deep affection. They had two children, and when they were five or six years old, the parents moved to the country, and took a house in an out-of-the-way village.'

'Is that all?' demanded Bressant, eyeing the Professor's face with great intentness.

'There's not much more. One of the first persons the minister—such he was now—met, on his entrance into the village, was the woman he had loved first—the wife of his false friend—she whom he had long believed dead. She had settled, several years before, in this place whither he had unawares followed her. In an interview—the first for nearly half a lifetime—all the old errors and falsehoods were cleared up. She told him how her husband's heartlessness and insolent indifference had made her leave him; and how, for the sake of her son, and partly also out of pride, she had made no attempt to repossess herself of the fortune with which she

had endowed her husband at their marriage. The hardest of all had been to leave her son, whom she loved with her whole heart; but he was sickly, and she dared not expose him to the chances of privation and hardship, such as she expected to endure. With some three thousand dollars in her pocket, she had come to America, and since then had never heard a word of those she had left, nor had they of her.

'About three years after his arrival, the minister's wife died. He took his two children, and went with them to New York, where they stayed nearly a year; and the widow of the old Knickerbocker found them out, and was as cordial as ever. But finally the minister decided to return to his country dwelling, and there he still remains.'

As Professor Valeyon concluded, he looked towards his auditor, having been conscious, especially during the latter part of the narrative, of the peculiar magnetic sensation which the steady glance of the young man's eyes produced.

But at the same moment, Bressant turned his head away, and closed his eyes, as if wearied by the strain which had been imposed upon his attention. The old gentleman presently arose, and after a moment's hesitation, he apparently

decided not to disturb or rouse his patient any farther. He could wait until another time for whatever discussion yet remained. So he betook himself quietly to the door.

He had nearly closed it, when, thinking he heard a sudden call or exclamation from within, he hastily reopened it, and looked into the room. But the invalid showed no signs of having spoken. His position was slightly changed, indeed, but his eyes were still closed, and his face turned somewhat away from the door.

'I must have been mistaken,' said Professor Valeyon, as he shut himself into the study. He walked to the table, and resting one hand upon it, stood for several moments with his head bent forwards, thinking. As he raised it, a sigh escaped him; nor was his countenance so serene as it had been half an hour before.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018